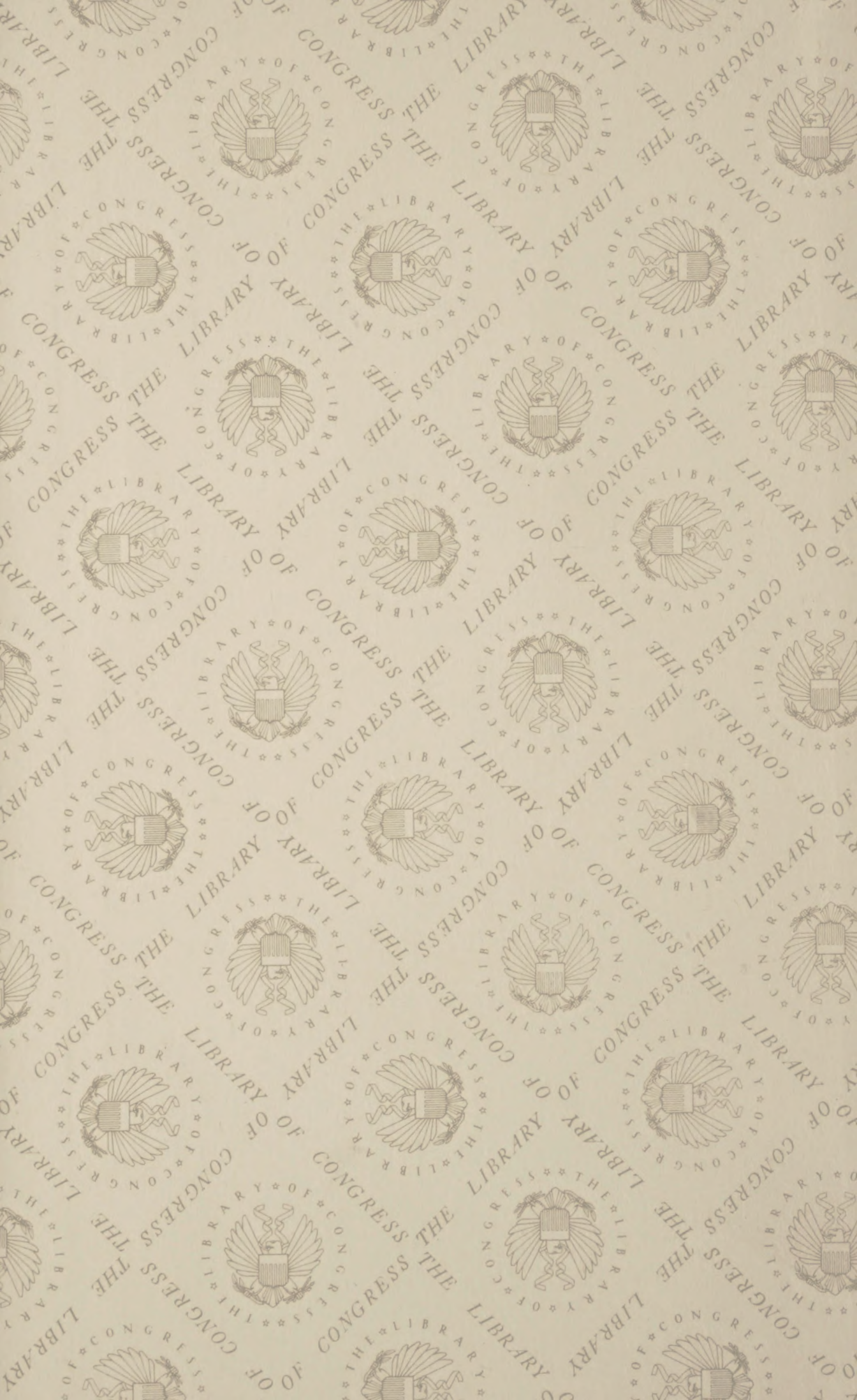






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THE WRECKED GALLEON.

Frontispiece.

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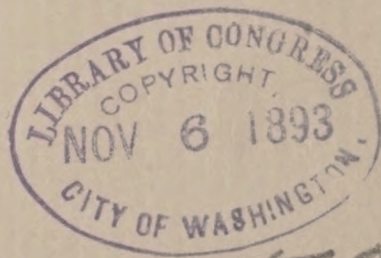
A STORY OF THE FLORIDA REEF

BY

KIRK MUNROE

AUTHOR OF "UNDER ORDERS," "PRINCE DUSTY," "CAB AND CABOOSE,"
"THE FLAMINGO FEATHER," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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CHAPTER I.

ON BOARD THE "AZTEC," GALLEON.

IN the harbor of Vera Cruz lay a goodly fleet of tall ships. From every masthead flags and streamers were fluttering in the light morning breeze, while above each towering poop drooped a broad banner that, with languid movements, disclosed the royal arms of Spain. Loosened sails hung from the heavy yards, and numberless small boats passed swiftly to and fro, over the sparkling waters, between the ships and the shore, laden with passengers and their personal effects, with small stores, and with the innumerable things that must

be taken aboard every ship at the last moment before sailing. It was the annual treasure fleet bound for Spain, freighted with the products of a year's labor in the Mexican mines, with golden vessels and silver plate from hundreds of Aztec temples, with pearls from the west coast, with chests of gorgeous feather robes stripped from the bodies of Indian chiefs, and even with Indians themselves, men, women, and children torn from their happy homes to be carried across the wide ocean for the amusement of an idle populace in the cities of their conquerors. Besides this rich freight, the spoil of one of the richest countries that the New World had yielded to the crown of Spain, the treasure fleet bore many passengers. There were soldiers who had acquired fortunes in the Aztec land that they hoped to enjoy in their own country, priests charged with the duty of conveying the spoils of heathen temples to Spanish churches, prisoners of war claimed as heretics by the Inquisition, and going to Spain for their trial—which, unless they forswore their faith, would end at the rack or stake.

In the great cabin of the *Santa Magdalena*, the Admiral's ship, sat the portly Bishop of Vera Cruz,

recalled to Spain on business connected with the Church. As he sat in a stuffed easy-chair, fanned by an Indian slave lad, he grumbled at the hard fate that dragged him from the ease and comforts of his New World surroundings, and compelled him to undertake so long and tedious a voyage. In this mood he found fault with everybody and everything about him. The young Indian who waited upon him trembled at his harsh words, and even the Admiral himself wished that courtesy did not compel him to remain an unwilling listener to the Bishop's complainings.

"Thirteen galleons be they, Don Hernando?" growled the Bishop. "Thirteen, no more and no less? I wonder that you could not have provided other than this unlucky number. The saints have indeed just cause for displeasure against one who so openly defies them, and I doubt if even my presence and prayers will avail to avert mishap."

"More ships are not to be had, your Holiness," answered the Admiral; "nor would one less hold the treasure that the King demands. You may see for yourself that all are laden beyond the limit; and to leave one behind would endanger the safety of all."

“Not so greatly as thy safety and—which is of greater importance—mine own, are endangered by the unlucky number, Don Hernando,” replied the Bishop, testily; “and, as I live, you have placed this ship in the greatest peril of all by crowding her cabin with thirteen passengers.”

“There were but twelve, your Holiness, until this very morning, when you insisted upon adding Fray Agrippa to the number of those who wait upon you.”

“What then!” exclaimed the Bishop, his dark face flushing with anger. “Would you have me travel with a less number of attendants than becomes my station? Have you no respect for the Church and her representatives? Fray Agrippa is a necessity to me and must remain; but another may be spared, and I command that you transfer the dog of an Englishman from this ship to some other.”

The Englishman thus insultingly referred to was Sir Richard Allanson, a brave seaman, whose ship had been captured many months before, after a gallant fight with an entire Spanish fleet. The survivors of his crew had been scattered to the galleys,

the mines, or other places where they might suffer the fullest effects of Spanish cruelty, while he had been thrown into a dungeon of the castle at Vera Cruz to be reserved for ransom. Word was at last received that the sum demanded had been raised by his friends, and would be paid upon the safe delivery of the prisoner at Seville. So he had this day been released from his sunless prison, and now, weak and pale from long confinement, he occupied a berth on the *Santa Magdalena*. His mind was full of conflicting emotions, as he lay concealed by a curtain from the other occupants of the cabin; but listening to and understanding every word of their conversation. He hardly dared believe that he was really on his way towards liberty and home. He was fearful lest something might still interfere to dash his hopes, and above all he was disgusted to find that he was to make the long voyage in company with the Spanish Bishop who, during his imprisonment, had been his chief tormentor and persecutor.

Thus when he heard the Admiral, who, brave man though he was, dared not dispute the Bishop's commands, order his transfer to the *Aztec*, a galleon that lay at anchor near the *Santa Magdalena*, he

gladly made ready to leave the hated presence, and felt that fortune was about to favor him after all.

The transfer of the prisoner from the Admiral's ship to the *Aztec* (where, by the way, he was most ungraciously received by her captain, who cordially detested all Englishmen) had scarcely been made, when the tide served and a gun from the castle of San Juan de Ulloa announced the hour of departure. Anchors were weighed, sails sheeted home, and amid the booming of guns, the fanfare of trumpets, and the chanting of priests, the treasure fleet stood out to sea, its homeward voyage begun.

Favored by gentle breezes, the heavily laden galleons sailed slowly but safely across the Gulf of Mexico to the island of Cuba; where, in the harbor of Havana, they lay for several days. Here the Admiral received despatches, and took on board several more distinguished passengers; while on the already over-crowded *Aztec* were stowed, in stifling quarters, between decks, some fifty negro slaves, whose owner had decided to remove them to Spain. These wretched beings, chained to stout wooden beams, were packed so closely as to find barely room to lie down, and their scanty allowance of food

was thrown to them once a day as though they had been so many wild animals. And yet there were women and young children among them. Their sufferings so moved the pity of Sir Richard, hardened as he had become to suffering and torture of every description, that he appealed to the captain of the *Aztec* to relieve it in a measure by allowing certain of them to come on deck each day, and to furnish them with a larger supply of drinking water. Of this there was an abundance on board; but with a degree of cruelty that found its keenest pleasure in the sufferings of others, the brutal Spaniard caused to be doled out each day to the wretches between decks, only such drops of the precious fluid as would save them from dying of thirst.

For answer to Sir Richard's appeal the captain merely bowed, shrugged his shoulders, and turned on his heel; while the sufferings of the slaves who had so sadly fallen into his hands were, if possible, increased. One day Sir Richard, looking down the open hatch at the negroes, saw one of them, a gigantic man, taller by a head than any of his fellows, holding in his arms a child who, with closed eyes, was moaning piteously. Catching Sir Richard's

eye the man murmured the single word "Agua" (water). The Englishman could not resist the appeal, and a moment later, with a bottle of water in his hand, he had entered the foul place and the child was drinking with eager gulps. For this act Sir Richard was roughly seized by two soldiers who, by the captain's orders, dragged him to his cabin, into which he was thrust with scant ceremony, and the door bolted behind him. Thus for his deed of mercy he was destined to close imprisonment for all the weeks that should elapse before a Spanish port could be reached. But that Providence which rules the seas and the lives of men ordered otherwise.

CHAPTER II.

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

THE weather of that day was intensely hot and breathless. There had been no breeze in the morning, and that of the afternoon came only in whirling gusts that dappled the surface of the water with dark patches, but did little towards aiding the progress of the fleet. At the same time the sea was heaved by great swells that caused the deeply laden galleons to roll so violently that they were in danger of losing their masts. From a brazen sky the sun's rays beat down so fiercely that the pitch on the decks melted and broke into little bubbles. Even the Spanish sailors, accustomed as they were to tropical weather, were prostrated by the terrible heat. It parched their tongues, and it blistered their skins whenever they left the shaded places in which they lay most of the time, panting and muttering curses against all things. With such suffer-

ings on deck, those endured by the chained prisoners beneath it were indescribably greater, and their state of torment was evidenced by gasping moans that could be heard throughout the ship, from end to end. Even Sir Richard in his sweltering cabin, longing for the cool dampness of the dungeon in which he had been so long confined, heard them and chided himself for murmuring at his own condition when other human beings were in so much worse plight.

As the day drew toward its close and the blessed relief of darkness was promised, even the furnace-like gusts of air that had occasionally bellied the sails ceased to be felt. An utter silence, only broken by the groaning of the ship, as she rolled heavily on the ever increasing swell, and by the moanings of her living freight, fell upon the ocean. Still the galleons were in motion, for the strong current of the Gulf Stream was bearing them steadily forward on their course, and they had almost passed the long chain of islands known as the "Isles of Martyrs," which with their outlying network of coral reefs bound the southern coast of Florida. This was the most dangerous portion of the entire voyage between Mexico and Spain, and the frame of many a golden-

freighted galleon already lay bleaching in the white caves of the Martyrs' Isles. For some reason, probably because in a light breeze she was unusually sluggish of movement, the *Aztec* was far behind the rest of the fleet and also nearer to the dreaded reefs than were any of the others.

Such was the state of affairs when the sun, like a huge globe of molten copper, sank into the sea. For a while an angry light glowed in the western sky, and then it was overspread as by a pall. The few stars that came into view were blotted out one after another, until the whole world was shrouded in a blackness so intense that it seemed suffocating.

Matters continued in this wise until nearly midnight; when, without a warning, the blackness was pierced by a fearful flash of lightning, accompanied by so terrific a burst of thunder that the Spaniards flung themselves face downwards on the decks, crying that the end of the world had come. Great drops of hot rain fell hissing into the sea; while the electric fluid flashed athwart the sky in one continuous sheet of blinding white light. So unbroken and tremendous was the crash of its accompanying thunder that even the roar of the approaching hurri-

cane was unheard, and the blast, sweeping down upon the doomed galleon, was unnoted until it struck her. Unprepared to receive it, and uncontrolled by her helm, she bent beneath the mighty weight of the wind, until the water poured in over her high bulwarks, and a piercing cry arose that she was about to founder.

At that moment a straining shroud snapped like a harp string, there came a rending crash of wood, and the mainmast went by the board, dragging the others with it in its ruin. Thus relieved, the ship righted and drove, a helpless wreck, before the hurricane. Long ere this the treacherous in-shore current had seized her, and had been drawing her, with ever increasing strength, toward the cruel white reefs. Now, urged in the same direction by the rushing wind, the stricken ship wallowed toward her fate. In less than an hour she struck with an awful shock, and a huge sea curling over her side swept half her company into the seething waters. Then she lifted, swung round, and struck again, this time with her bows pointing seaward. Here she remained fixed; though it seemed as if each blow of the furious sea must rend her strong frame in pieces.

The survivors of the crew made a mad rush for the boats. Several of them were stove and useless; but three were found to be still serviceable, and these were finally launched under the protecting lee of the towering poop. At the last moment the Spanish captain bethought himself of the English prisoner, whose life was worth saving on account of its ransom. He sprang below, hastily drew the bolt of Sir Richard's door, threw it open, and bade the Englishman follow him if he valued his life.

During the last terrible hour Sir Richard's practised ear had kept him well informed of what was taking place. He had abandoned all hope of escape from the first, and the shock of the ship's striking found him on his knees, calmly commending his soul to its Maker, and preparing to meet death like a Christian gentleman and a brave sailor. Nor had his thoughts and prayers been wholly devoted to his own condition. He remembered, with a mighty pity, the black wretches, whose piercing shrieks rang in his ears, as, chained and helpless, they awaited a like fate with himself.

As Sir Richard's door was flung open, a momentary gleam of hope entered his breast, and he quickly

followed the captain to the deck. There the latter bade him lay hold upon the rope that held one of the boats and slip down into it; but the Englishman hesitated. A flash of lightning showed him that the remnant of the crew did not nearly fill the boats, and that there was room for as many more.

"The slaves!" he shouted in the captain's ear. "Are you going to leave them?"

"Death and Furies! Yes!" cried the captain. "Of course we leave them. Would you have me overload the boats with the black cattle? In with you or I will leave you with them!"

"Then leave me," answered Sir Richard, calmly. "If they are black, they are yet human, and no Englishman would save his own life at the expense of others."

"*Por Dios!* Your miserable carcass shall be saved for what it is worth, whether you will or not!" screamed the Spaniard, furiously, as he sprang upon the Englishman with the intention of pitching him into one of the boats. Then ensued a struggle the like of which has seldom been recorded. Two bitter enemies fought, one to save the life of the other, and one to prevent his own from being saved. They

used no weapons, but, locked in a close embrace, they reeled to and fro on the wave-washed deck, each trying to force the other over the stern. Sir Richard had by no means recovered his full strength or the Spaniard would have speedily been worsted in the wrestling match. As it was he was slowly but surely forcing the Englishman to the rail. They overhung it, and in another instant he would have accomplished his purpose.

Suddenly, as the Englishman was about to give way, a yell as of a wild beast sounded behind them, and a crashing blow descended on the head of the Spanish captain. Then his limp body was seized, held aloft for an instant, and hurled far out into the raging waters.

Those in the boats hastily cut the ropes that held them to the wreck of the galleon, and in a moment the three frail craft were swept out of sight, never to be heard of more. As they disappeared, a gigantic black figure towered above the storm-swept deck and uttered cry after cry of such unhuman wildness that they fittingly blended with the shrieks of the hurricane. At the feet of this figure lay the Englishman, Sir Richard Allanson, to all appearance dead.

CHAPTER III.

BLACK CÆSAR.

THE gigantic negro who had so opportunely come to Sir Richard's rescue, was known as "Black Cæsar." He had been chief of his tribe in his own country, and although many years had elapsed since he had been torn from it and driven to the barracoons, his authority was still undisputed by those of his own race who had accompanied him into slavery. His relentless fury against his oppressors and his enormous strength rendered him a terror to his Spanish masters, and they had exercised every species of cruelty upon him in the hope of breaking his spirit. His body was covered with brands from hot irons, with welts from the driver's lash, with scars from cuts, and with wounds of every description, including those made by the teeth of savage dogs; but Black Cæsar had never yielded. His spirit was still unsubdued, and he still walked

as erect and defiant toward all men, as when in his native African forests. He would long since have been killed as being too dangerous a piece of property to own, but for one thing. In all the Spanish islands there was not his equal as a tamer of wild cattle. He would seize the fiercest bull by the horns and overthrow him with a single movement of his mighty arms. Such was the terror he inspired in the wild creatures that after one of them had felt the black man's power he was henceforth submissive to his will, no matter how fierce he might be with others.

Black Cæsar's last owner, a Spanish grandee who had been Adelantado of Cuba, had, upon being recalled to Spain, conceived the idea of taking him to Madrid, and there placing him in the arena as a matador, or bull-fighter. Now Black Cæsar had one child, a boy five years of age, whom he called Kabele, and this child was the one object in all the world that the man cared for. The boy's mother was dead, and upon him the fierce father lavished the whole wealth of his affections. A kindness to his boy called forth such gratitude that he was certain to return it in some way. On the other hand, did the child suffer

from a suspicion of ill-treatment, the father was roused to such fury that he became a terror to all about him. An effort had been made to leave the child behind, when it was decided to send the father to fight with Spanish bulls; but Black Cæsar, with the boy in his arms, had defied any one to take him away, and no one was found bold enough to make the attempt. So while the Adelantado found luxurious quarters on board the *Santa Magdalena*, his huge slave, still holding the child, submitted to be chained between decks on the *Aztec*. It was the life of his boy that Sir Richard Allanson saved when he defied the wrath of the Spanish captain and carried Kabele the blessed water, for want of which he was dying.

From the time that the hurricane first struck the *Aztec*, Black Cæsar had made furious efforts to break his bonds. He succeeded in wrenching apart his fetters; but could not break the chain, that, as an extra precaution, had been fastened to an iron collar about his neck. At last when the ship struck, her frame was so broken that the timber about which this chain was passed worked loose, and the giant, tearing it from its place, found himself free. He

rushed on deck to discover the exact condition of affairs, and found that the ship was deserted, while he and his companions had been left to perish miserably in their chains. His rage knew no bounds. Suddenly a flash of lightning revealed two struggling figures at the extreme after-end of the poop deck, and seizing an axe from a stand at the foot of the broken mainmast, the negro sprang toward them. Feeling certain that they were Spaniards and therefore enemies, he would have killed them both, had not another flash disclosed the white face of the Englishman who had that day saved the life of his child.

To dispose of the Spanish captain as already described, was but the work of a moment. As he disappeared over the ship's side the huge negro, towering to his full height, and with uplifted arms, screamed defiance to the hurricane and to his human enemies, with the barbaric battle-cry of his people.

All at once his mood changed; he ceased his wild chant, and stooping, he lifted Sir Richard with infinite tenderness, and bore him to a spot sheltered from the force of the wind and waves. Then he brought the child Kabele, and placing him beside

his benefactor, bade him watch the unconscious man while he liberated his fellow-captives.

When the Englishman became again thoroughly conscious of his surroundings, daylight was breaking, the force of the storm had sensibly diminished, and a confused group of black faces was anxiously watching him. As soon as he was able to sit up and talk, the giant negro, whom he recognized as the one who had asked him for water on the preceding day, approached him. Kneeling on the deck and placing Sir Richard's hand upon his own head the negro said, in Spanish : " White man, you saved the life of my Kabele. For that, my life is yours, and Black Cæsar is your slave forever. These others will obey me, and what you tell us that will we do."

"Black man, or 'Black Cæsar' if such be your name," answered Sir Richard, faintly, "if you have cause for gratitude to me it is but slight. When human beings are thrown together in such desperate plight as ours, there can be no master and no slave; but all must share alike. However, if you come to me for advice, that will I cheerfully give to the best of my poor ability, when I shall have considered the bearings of our situation."

They brought Sir Richard drink and food of which he stood greatly in need, and by which his strength was marvellously restored. When the sun rose they saw a low-lying coast about a league from them, and directly in the track of the wind as it was then blowing. While the sea still beat with great fury on the reef where they were, and at times dashed high over the wrecked galleon, the water between them and the land was comparatively smooth. They could discover no signs of the boats, nor yet of the other ships of the fleet.

While Sir Richard examined into the condition of the vessel as well as he was able the blacks watched his movements with eager interest. There were of them twenty-two men, ten women, and one child, Kabele. The rest lay dead in their loathsome prison-house, between decks, or had been washed overboard. At length the Englishman spoke to Black Cæsar, who had silently followed him about the ship, and said:

“It is a marvel to me that this craft has withstood the buffetings of the sea so long; but certain it is, that if she remains here she must go to pieces sooner or later. The tide appears to me to be flowing, and with this gale it should be an extra high one. There

is a possibility that, if the ship could be floated over the reef into smooth water, she might remain on top long enough to bear us to yonder land, short of which I can see no chance of our salvation. Set your fellows to work then, and let them cast overboard all guns, anchors, chains, and whatever else of weight they can lay hands upon."

The negroes, who had only waited directions, sprang to this work with a will. Their labor was now for themselves, for their own lives and freedom, and they performed it with an alacrity such as the driver's lash had never inspired. Overboard went the grinning cannon, through open ports, or through jagged openings cut in the high bulwarks. The anchors were cut away; tiers of weighty chain cable were overhauled and dropped into the sea; every heavy and movable thing that could be got at was made to follow. At length the galleon was relieved of many tons of weight and her uneasy movements gave signs that she was almost afloat.

"She moves! She floats!" shouted Sir Richard at last, as, with the send of a great sea, the ship was lifted clear of the bottom and carried some fifty yards up the reef. "Oh, for a boat," he added, "that we might aid her progress with a kedge!"

But there was no need of this. The tide still rose, slowly but surely, and the movement of the ship was continued. Finally, after many haltings and bumpings, after scrapings that threatened to tear the planking from her bottom, and forward plunges that shook her from stem to stern, the *Aztec* slid clear of the reef, into the smooth, deep water on its inner side.

At this happy result of their efforts the negroes yelled with delight; while Sir Richard's satisfaction found vent in a cheery "Hurrah!" He added a fervent hope that the "old gold mine" might still be sound enough to bear them across the channel in which they were now floating and plant herself safely on some sandy beach. This hope was, however, doomed to disappointment; for it was soon evident that the galleon was leaking so badly that ere long she must go to the bottom. The negroes were panic-stricken at this discovery; and while some of them broke into loud wailings, others awaited their fate with expressions of dull apathy. Black Cæsar sternly ordered the cries to cease, and turned to Sir Richard for orders.

CHAPTER IV.

GALE ELLICOT'S DISCOVERY.

“**T**HERE is but one thing for it, Cæsar,” said the Englishman, in answer to the black man’s inquiring look, “and that is a raft. It must be made quickly too, for this old hooker will soon be down among the mermaids, whose company, I, for one, have no wish to seek sooner than I can help. So look lively and send some of your spry lads over the side to lash those spars together. It is a mercy that we did not cut them adrift, for they are our only hope.”

The masts and yards that had gone by the board, at the first blast of the hurricane, still floated alongside, attached to the ship by a confused tangle of rigging. To clear this, to cut away the soaked and dragging sails from the yards, to lash the masts together with the yards across them, to lay a flooring of hatches, planks ripped from the bulwarks, and

such other material as they could lay hands upon, was the work of the succeeding hour. At its end the galleon, which had been steadily drifting toward land and was now within half a mile of it, had sunk so low in the water that it was evidently high time to leave her. Among the things hastily transferred to the raft were a few casks of provisions, a chest of tools, several axes, a plentiful supply of powder and ball, and all the muskets that could be found. Besides these each of the negroes was armed with a cutlass, and several of them had secured pistols ; for they knew not what enemies they might encounter on the island they were approaching.

They had no time to search for the treasure of gold and silver, with which Sir Richard knew the ship to be laden. Even had they found it they could not have taken it with them. With their own weight added to that of the cargo piled upon it the clumsy craft to which they must entrust themselves was already level with the water and would bear no more. After cutting loose from the galleon they were surprised to see her drift in one direction while they were carried in another. It was evident to Sir Richard that the wreck was impelled by some

strong under-current that was setting it directly towards shore, but which they did not feel; while the wind and a surface current were bearing them toward an opening in the land that resembled the mouth of a river.

Being so low in the water the occupants of the raft soon lost sight of the galleon, and knew not when she took her final plunge to the bottom; nor did they much care, as their own condition was of more immediate importance. When last seen she was close in to a bold rocky shore, and Sir Richard took a mental note of the place with the vague thought that, at some future time, it might be worth while to attempt the recovery of some of the lost treasure by diving at that point.

In a very short time the raft was carried into what they had taken for the mouth of a river; it proved, however, to be a creek separating two islands, and pouring the tide-water with great velocity into a broad bay that opened beyond them. They would have been swept through the creek and into the bay, had not Black Cæsar sprung overboard and swum ashore with the end of a line that he made fast to a tree and thus arrested their progress.

It was with mingled emotions of thankfulness, fear, and curiosity that this band of black men, whose slavery had been so miraculously exchanged for freedom, and the white man to whom they looked for guidance, stepped ashore on one of the fairest isles of the southern seas. It was of singular beauty, though of limited extent, being not more than half a mile broad, by about a mile in length. It was wholly formed of coral rock, though its height above the water in the centre showed it to have been at some time subject to the effects of an earthquake or some other uplifting force of nature. While much of its shore line was concealed beneath a dense thicket of mangrove, there arose behind these a tall forest of stately trees. Encircled by this forest the survivors of the *Aztec* discovered a small lake, or pond, of fresh water as clear as glass, and fed by a great spring, boiling up from a central basin of white coral that gleamed like marble in the sunlight. From the lake a narrow stream ran down to the shore, and at certain stages of the tide, shoals of mullet and other salt-water fish made their way up this stream for a holiday in the coral basin.

In this beautiful place on the edge of the pond,

and in the shadow of a grove of tall cocoanut palms, Black Cæsar and his companions, following Sir Richard's advice, built themselves huts of palmetto thatch, and surrounded them with a stockade of stout posts bound together with the tough cables of the rattan vine.

Here Sir Richard lived for several years, with only these rude associates for company. They regarded him with such love and reverence that his slightest word was law, and his influence over them was unbounded. He instructed them, so far as he was able, in the arts of civilization; but with the limited means at his disposal, the progress made in this direction was small. Although he made several efforts to discover the wreck of the *Aztec*, in hopes of obtaining many useful articles from it, he could find no trace of the lost ship. In these searches his negro friends could not be induced to lend any assistance, so filled were they with a superstitious dread of the ill-fated vessel in which they had suffered so greatly. By means of an English ship that struck on the great reef, but which the crew, assisted by him and his faithful blacks, succeeded in getting off almost unharmed, Sir Richard finally escaped

from the island and reached the home that he had well-nigh despaired of ever seeing again. After his departure from among them the negroes, no longer restrained by his influence, became first wreckers, then pirates; and for many years the name of Black Cæsar was the terror of that coast. At length his depredations ceased and he was heard of no more; but his fate is involved in mystery, and it is not known what became of him.

The foregoing incident of Sir Richard Allanson's life is writ out by his son Hugh for the benefit of his children, that they may know what manner of man their ancestor was, and that they may learn to imitate the noble qualities that has stamped him as a hero and a Christian gentleman.

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This was the end of the MS. which Gale Ellicot one day discovered in the little, old-fashioned, brass-nailed trunk that he had gone to the attic to empty of its musty papers and bring down stairs. It was evidently of a long-ago date; for, though the handwriting was bold and clear, the ink was so faded as to be in places almost illegible, and the sheets on which it was written were torn and yellowed by

time. The youth who now sat holding them in his hand, and absorbed in the reflections aroused by what he had just read, was a squarely built, bright-eyed fellow of about seventeen. His well-shaped hands were hard and brown, while his resolute young face also bore evidences of a reckless exposure to sun, wind, and weather. At length he was aroused from his reverie by the sound of a voice from below, calling:

“Gale! Gale! What has become of you? Why don’t you bring the trunk down stairs?”

“Coming, mother,” replied the boy, and thrusting his new-found treasure into his pocket, he shouldered the empty trunk, and left the attic with it.

. That evening after the trunk was packed with his own things, and the children had gone to bed, Gale Ellicot and his mother sat together in the living room of their tiny cottage for a long last talk. The boy was to leave the next day to be gone for several months, or longer than he had ever before been away from home. How dear even the shabby furniture looked at that moment. On the table stood a lamp that had been bought with the very first money he had ever earned. The arm-chair in which he sat



GALE READING THE MANUSCRIPT.

had been his father's. Nearly every article in the room had some tender association clinging to it. Outside, the wind howled dismally, and a cold November rainstorm beat against the window panes; but it only added to the warmth within and to the brightness of the driftwood fire that blazed, with many tinted flames, on the open hearth. The dancing firelight disguised the shabbiness of the room, which would have been painfully disclosed by day; for, in spite of the apparent comfort of their surroundings, the Ellicots were very poor. Even the driftwood fire, which is so often an evidence of wealth and luxury, was one of the signs of their poverty, and the wood pile in the kitchen shed represented many a toilsome day spent by Gale upon the beach.

Five years before, the boy's father, who had been a minister in the seaport village of Rockpine on the Maine coast, had died, and ever since the Ellicots' struggle for existence had been a bitter one. Besides Mrs. Ellicot and Gale there was blue-eyed May, two years younger than he, and sturdy little John, who was twelve years old and always hungry. From the first Gale had done all that he could for

the support of the family. He had run errands, worked in gardens, gathered driftwood, taken summer visitors out sailing, formed one of the crew of a fishing vessel, and, during the summer just past, he had been boatswain of the schooner yacht *Egret*, which hailed from Boston, and had put into Rock-pine shorthanded early in the season. In spite of his youth there was no better sailor than he in the place. This fact was so well appreciated by Mr. Almy, the owner of the *Egret*, that he had just written to offer Gale a mate's berth for a southern cruise that would last all winter.

This offer had come like a godsend to the struggling family, for they were at their wit's end to know how they should get through the season, and Gale was on the point of shipping for one of the hardest and most perilous of all voyages, a winter's cruise to the Banks, when it came. Of course he accepted it promptly and gladly. At first he was highly elated at the prospect of sailing in those far Southern seas that he had so longed to visit, but without a hope of ever having the chance. But as the time for his departure drew near he grew more and more thoughtful, and on this last night before

leaving his home with all its dear ones, it almost seemed as though he could not go.

As he and his mother sat hand in hand, talking in low tones, they were startled by a loud knock at the outer door. Gale opened it and a man stepped into the room. At the sight of him Mrs. Ellicot's heart sank like lead, and she could hardly control her voice sufficiently to ask him to be seated.

CHAPTER V.

DEBT AND ITS TERRORS.

IT is a perilous thing to run in debt, and one of the most dangerous forms of debt is a note for which the only security is one's own home. A note is transferable, and thus, though it may at first be held by a friend who is not particular about the interest, and who willingly grants a request for an extension of time, it may, at any moment, pass into the hands of one who will demand a prompt payment of his legal dues to the last cent. It was so in the present case. In her distress and poverty, soon after her husband's death, Mrs. Ellicot had accepted Deacon Wiggin's kind offer of a loan, for which she had insisted on giving him a five-years' note. The loan was a thousand dollars, which was something more than all the property she owned in the world. On this sum, aided by what Gale could pick up by doing odd jobs, the widow had managed to support

her little family and send the elder children to school for nearly five years. Now the money was completely exhausted, and this had made it necessary for Gale to give up school that winter and seek for something to do. He loved to study, and hoped that, in some way, he might be able to go to college, for which he was nearly prepared.

The boy did not let his mother know what a pang it cost him to abandon this cherished scheme ; but, declaring that he would rather be a sailor than anything else in the world, and dwelling upon the fact that it was the only business for which he was already fitted, he began seeking for a berth that would yield support to the little family of which he was now the main stay.

It so happened that good, warm-hearted Deacon Wiggin had recently died. In the settlement of his estate it was discovered that, owing to his widespread charities, he had left little behind, save a name that was loved and cherished far and wide. Much of his property, including the Ellicot's note, passed into the hands of Abel Gripmore, who owned a sardine canning factory, and was not only the wealthiest, but the "hardest" man in Rockpine.

He had already applied to Mrs. Ellicot for the unpaid interest, that the easy-going Deacon had never thought of claiming, and threatened if it were not paid to take possession of their home the moment the note fell due. By desperate efforts, during the past summer, the Ellicots had succeeded in paying fifty dollars of the interest money; but two hundred dollars still remained to be raised.

Abel Gripmore was the visitor to the little brown cottage that November evening, and the moment Mrs. Ellicot caught sight of his unsympathetic face she felt that he had come to make further demands for money.

"Well, Mrs. Ellicot," he began, "it ain't just the kind of an evening one would choose to make a call on, but as I was passing and saw a light, I thought I might as well drop in and speak of our little matter of business."

"I was afraid so," said the widow, faintly.

"Oh, you ain't no call to be afraid, Mrs. Ellicot," said the visitor, with a grim smile, "for I've come to make an offer that's in every way to your advantage. You see the way of it is this. I've decided to build a lobster factory, and there ain't a prettier site for it

on the coast than this very point of land. Now, if you can't pay that note and the balance of the interest due on it by the first of May, I shall be obliged to enter suit against you for it. If you can pay it, on or before that date, of course I won't have nothing more to say, except that you 'll be paying more'n this place is worth."

"I 'm very much afraid that I sha'n't be able——"

"That 's just it," interrupted Mr. Gripmore. "It is n't no way likely you will be able to find the money, and so you 'll have to leave here by the first of May anyway. But I'd like to get to work sooner than that; so, if you 'll move out by the first of January I 'll let you off the whole of the interest still due. If you go by the first of February I 'll knock off one hundred dollars. If it is n't convenient to do that, and you 'll give possession by the first of March, I 'll allow you fifty dollars. In either case I 'll give you a release from all further obligations. Now I call that a pretty liberal offer, when I might, easy enough, get judgment for the face of the note with interest and costs, and could hold it over you till the very last cent was paid."

"Oh, Mr. Gripmore!" exclaimed the widow, "I

was in hopes that, if we succeeded in paying one hundred dollars next year and paid the interest regularly after that, you would be willing to extend the time of the note, and let us stay here. This has been my only home ever since I was married ; my children were born here ; my husband died here, and if it is taken from us we have nowhere in the world to go. Gale will be able to earn more and more money every year now, and I 'm sure it won't be very long before we shall be able to pay both principal and interest. If you 'd only please give us a little time."

"I 'm very sorry, ma'am, but business is business," replied the wealthy man. "This place suits me better 'n any other and on the first of May I shall certainly take possession of it, if you don't accept one of my offers and let me have it sooner. I 'll give you from now till the first of January to consider it ; but I shall hope to hear from you before that time. Good-evening, ma'am."

"Oh, Gale ! what shall we do ?" cried Mrs. Ellicot, as the door closed behind the man who held this terrible power of debt over them.

"We won't do a thing about it, mother, until the

first of May," replied the boy promptly. "We 'll just hold on to our home till the very last minute. Then we 'll have my winter's wages to fall back on anyway. But, oh, mother! It would be awful to have to give up our dear little home, would n't it? It does n't seem as though we could be happy in any other place in all the world."

So they talked of their property, their hopes, and their fears, and of what they would do if they only had money, until Gale suddenly recollected the strange story of the long-ago treasure ship, that he had read that day. Then he produced the package of time-stained manuscript that he had discovered in the old trunk, and read it to his mother. She listened with an ever increasing interest, and when he finished she exclaimed: "Why, Gale, Sir Richard Allanson must have been your great-great-grandfather; for my mother's mother was an Allanson, and that little trunk came to me with a lot of other old things from her house."

"Then you think it is a really true story, mother?"

"I have n't a doubt of it, though I never heard of it before."

“ Well,” said the boy, “ I only wish great-great-grandfather Richard had found the *Aztec* again. Maybe we would n’t be so poor now if he had. Just think of all that gold and silver lying at the bottom of the sea, and doing nobody any good.”

“ I expect it might just as well be there as anywhere else so far as we are concerned,” replied his mother, with a sad smile. “ But now, dear, you must go to bed, for it is almost to-morrow, and you have to make an early start.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG MATE'S TEMPTATION.

THE following evening Gale Ellicot had left his home and its dear ones far behind, and had reported for duty on board the *Egret*, which he found lying at an East Boston wharf, where she was taking in stores and fitting for her long cruise. He was disappointed to be met by a new captain in place of the weather-beaten old salt with whom he had sailed the previous summer ; but Captain Starbuck had not cared to take a winter voyage, and Captain Earl Staver had been engaged in his place. The latter was not a yacht sailor, but had for several years commanded a trading schooner in the West Indies, and had been highly recommended to Mr. Almy as one of the most skilful navigators of those waters. He was a sallow, slightly-built man, who looked almost effeminate in comparison with the broad-shouldered Maine boy who was to be

his mate. The two gazed at each other curiously as they first met and shook hands, and Gale asked himself if the man who seemed to find such difficulty in looking him squarely in the face could be a good sailor.

Whatever Captain Staver thought of his young mate, he was evidently determined to cultivate the most friendly relations with him. He did everything in his power to make Gale comfortable and secure his good-will. The youth would have wondered at this if he had known that the captain had tried to fill his berth with a man of his own selection, and had been unable to conceal his disappointment when Mr. Almy informed him that he had already offered the position to another. Captain Staver had, however, been left to his own choice of a crew, and in overlooking their work Gale admitted that he had gathered a lot of first-class sailormen, though none of them seemed to have ever shipped on a yacht before. He also remarked upon the fact that most of them were swarthy chaps, who seemed to be of Spanish or Portuguese origin, and Captain Staver said that he had chosen them for that very reason. They were acclimated to tropic weather and accustomed to sailing in tropic seas.

After a few days' hard work in setting up rigging, bending on new sails, taking in stores, and in other ways getting the yacht ready for sea, Gale felt that he was pretty well acquainted with his new captain. He could not help a certain sort of liking for one who was so uniformly kind to him. Though the man's manner lacked the frankness that generally marks an honest sailor, Gale strove to forget this and to regard him with the implicit faith that should always exist between those who embark on long voyages in company. At length, one evening after a hard day's work, the captain invited his mate to take a shore dinner with him. Gale accepted the invitation, and thoroughly enjoyed the dinner, which was served in a private room in a first-class restaurant, and was the best to which he had ever sat down. His entertainer seemed, for a moment, somewhat provoked that he refused a glass of the champagne that was brought on toward the close of the meal, but he passed the matter by with a laugh, saying :

“ Oh, well, you 'll come to it before you 're much older. I never drink anything myself on shipboard, but a glass now and then on shore does n't do any harm.”

“Perhaps not,” replied Gale, “but I’ve made up my mind that I can get along just as well without it.”

Then the subject was changed. After the dinner was finished and Captain Staver had lighted a cigar, while Gale had politely declined the one offered to him, the former said :

“I’ve taken such a fancy to you, Ellicot, that I’ve decided to let you in on a scheme that will put a snug sum of money into your pocket. What do you say to making a clean thousand dollars, and doing me a favor at the same time ?”

A thought of the dear little home, burdened with its thousand-dollar debt, flashed into Gale’s mind as he answered : “I shall be only too happy to do you a favor, and also to make that amount of money, if I can do it honestly.”

“Honestly ! Oh, yes. There’s nothing dishonest about the scheme, it’s only a littly risky, that’s all ; but if I’ve sized you up rightly you’re too brave a lad to hold back from a bit of danger. You see we’re bound for a general cruise among the West India islands, and will be more than likely to touch at Hayti. At any rate I can arrange things so that

it will seem necessary for us to do so. Well, there's a big fight going on down there just now, between a lot of honest fellows who have been driven to the hills, and a lot of rascals who are in power and trying to run the government for what money they can make out of it. Of course I'm not interested in the quarrel, except that I'd naturally like to see the honest fellows come out ahead. Unfortunately they are very short of arms. If they don't get a supply pretty soon they'll have to give in and the rascals will have everything their own way.

“Now the honest fellows have some wealthy friends here in Boston, who will gladly supply these arms, and are willing to pay something handsome for getting them there. Having learned that we are going down there, and that I know all the merits of the case, besides being in sympathy with the honest party, these friends propose that we shall quietly stow away a few thousand muskets, bayonets, and pistols in the *Egret*, and run our chances of putting them where they will do the most good. Of course I could do this alone; for I have got together a crew of fellows who will do anything I say. I always make it a rule though to

share a good thing with my mate whenever he's a decent sort of a fellow, as I believe you to be. So I've made up my mind to let you in, and put a cool thousand dollars in your pocket. If you say the word we can have these things aboard in no time, and nobody ever be the wiser for it. How does the scheme strike you?"

"Have you told Mr. Almy of it?" asked Gale, who had listened to the plan thus unfolded by his superior officer, with surprise, and at the same time with a very confused idea of its right and wrong.

"Certainly not," answered the captain. "He does n't need the money that we'll make out of it, and then, as owner of the yacht, he might have foolish ideas concerning the neutrality laws. But that would be nonsense, because we are not a government vessel, nor even a trader bound to discharge only such goods as are shown on our manifest. The *Egret* is a yacht, and, as everybody knows, the crew of a yacht are entitled to certain perquisites. The cook has the contents of the slush bucket to dispose of, the steward receives his commission on all purchases, the men receive tips from visitors, and why

should n't the officers have a chance to make a dollar now and then?"

"But would n't the yacht be in danger of seizure if we were caught?" demanded Gale.

"Ah! but there's not the slightest chance of our being caught. I know that coast and its people too well for anything of that kind."

"But if we were caught?"

"I tell you we can't be," answered the captain, impatiently.

"I'm very sorry, sir, but I don't think we ought to have anything to do with this scheme," said Gale, to whom the other's refusal to give him a direct answer was equivalent to an acknowledgment that the yacht would be placed in danger by such a transaction as he proposed. "I should like to oblige you, and I should like to have a thousand dollars. I could never touch a cent though, that I had not come by honestly, and I cannot think it honest to risk the loss of another's property without his consent. Moreover, if you insist on carrying out this scheme, I shall consider it my duty to inform Mr. Almy of the danger in which his boat is placed."

“So you are a sneak after all, as well as a coward, are you?” cried the other, his face livid with rage, as he rose from the table and began rapidly pacing the room.

“As you please, Captain Staver,” answered Gale coolly; “but at any rate I have been taught to be honest, and so long as I live I hope I shall not forget my teaching.”

“Oh, well,” said the other, controlling his feelings with an effort, “it’s all right, if you will insist upon holding such absurd notions, and I’m sorry I let my temper get the better of me. It is a pretty serious disappointment though to lose the chance of making several thousand dollars so easily, and of doing real good at the same time. Of course, if you won’t go into it I shall have to give up the scheme; for without your help it would be impossible for me to carry it out. So now, if you’ll excuse me, I’ll go and tell my friends that I can’t have anything to do with it.”

From that time on, Captain Staver treated his young mate with marked coolness, and it was evident that no real friendship could exist between them. Gale watched carefully everything that was

taken into the yacht, and seeing no signs of any muskets, concluded that the captain had kept his word, and refused to take them. This was a great relief; for, had he seen anything of the kind coming on board, he had fully decided to report it to Mr. Almy, who visited the yacht daily. As it was, he thought it best not to say anything of what had passed between him and his superior officer, concerning the matter.

For all this the contraband goods were on board, and snugly stowed among the *Egret's* ballast, where they had been placed the night before Gale's arrival.

The very day before that appointed for sailing, Gale noticed a pale-faced boy, apparently about fifteen years of age, sitting on the string-piece of the wharf, a short distance from the yacht, and gazing earnestly at it. He also noticed that the *Egret's* cabin boy, a Cuban named Manuel, who had been engaged by Captain Staver, was making faces at the young stranger and applying insulting epithets to him. Gale was too busy to pay much attention to this, and did not see Manuel slip ashore and disappear behind one of the buildings on the

wharf. Nor did he see the young rascal reappear around the further corner of the building, steal up behind the unsuspecting lad, and deal him a sudden blow. The mate did, however, hear the cry of terror, and the loud splash, that marked the strange lad's disappearance, as he lost his balance and plunged into the swirling tide that was running out with great force, between the yacht and the wharf at which she lay.



“NOTHING DISHONEST, ONLY A LITTLE RISKY.”

CHAPTER VII.

ALECK PENROSE, CABIN BOY.

G ALE ELLICOT was a clear-headed fellow and prompt to act in an emergency. At the sounds of the cry and the splash, denoting that the boy was overboard, he sprang to the side of the yacht, holding a coil of rope that he intended to throw to the lad the moment he re-appeared. When the struggling figure came to the surface Gale instantly realized, by his actions, that he not only was unable to swim, but was too paralyzed by terror to make any effort towards saving himself. As he again sank, the young mate, kicking off his shoes, and uttering a shout of "Man overboard!" took a splendid header from the yacht's rail, and also disappeared beneath the dark waters.

When next seen he had one arm about the boy, and making a desperate struggle against the swift tide to regain the yacht. "Throw me a rope!"

he shouted, and Captain Staver, who had rushed up from below on hearing the startling cry of "Man overboard," flung the end of a line toward the brave swimmer. Had he miscalculated the distance? Was his strength insufficient? or did he purposely make a short cast? Certainly one of these three things was the case; for the rope failed to meet Gale's outstretched hand by several yards. Before it could be gathered in and thrown again, he and his helpless burden had been swept far beyond its reach.

At this moment another figure sprang to the yacht's deck, and an imperative voice gave the order for a boat to be lowered. It was that of the *Egret's* owner, and the crew promptly sprang to obey it. In their eagerness too many men tried to do the same thing at once, the falls became tangled, and it was some minutes before the boat was in the water. Mr. Almy, who had waved Captain Staver to one side, sat in the stern sheets and held the tiller ropes. With a set, white face the owner ordered his men to "give way!" Under the impulse of a powerful stroke the light boat darted forward in the direction of where Gale had last been seen. Now no trace of him was to be discovered. The owner's face grew

sterner and whiter as the probable result of the delay in getting the boat overboard became apparent. The strongest swimmer, burdened as the young mate had been, must have succumbed to that fierce tide. He was nowhere to be seen, though they commanded an uninterrupted view for a long distance. He must have gone down, and the lad for whom he had perilled his life with him. He might have saved himself had he been willing to relinquish his burden, but Mr. Almy knew that Gale Ellicot would never do that so long as his own life lasted. No, they must have sunk, and two lives had been sacrificed to Manuel's mischievous blow, which Mr. Almy had witnessed from a distance as he approached the yacht. He ground his teeth savagely as he thought of it.

At length the fruitless search was abandoned, and the boat was pulled slowly back toward the *Egret*. It was kept close in to the wharves to escape the full force of the tide. Suddenly Mr. Almy held up his hand for the men to cease rowing, turned his head and listened intently. Then came the quick order, "Give way Port! Hold hard Starboard! Steady! Give way all!" and the next minute the

boat dashed into the dripping blackness under a wharf that they had nearly passed. Now the men also heard, above the gurgling of the waters, the faint cry that had attracted the owner's keen-eared attention; but for some moments they could not tell whence it proceeded.

"Help! Quick! I'm letting go!" came the cry, apparently from under their bows, and then the ready boathook of the bow oarsman was caught in Gale Ellicot's clothing. They were just in time, for the strong hold was already relaxing from about the pile, against which the brave swimmer had been carried by the tide, and to which he had clung. He had not lost consciousness when they got him into the boat; but his left arm was clasped so rigidly about the form of the lad whom he had refused to abandon, even to save himself, that they had difficulty in relaxing it.

As the boat again ran alongside the yacht, and Captain Staver saw that its mission had been successful, the expression of his face would have puzzled an observer. It showed a conflict of emotions; but there was nothing in it to indicate the joy that his tone was intended to convey as he said to Mr.

Almy : " You 've done well, sir, but I 'd about given up all hope, you were gone so long. It would have been a terrible blow to me to have lost so fine a young officer as Mr. Ellicot ; all on account of a miserable little wharf rat too. I 'm sorry, though, that I caused you so much trouble by that unlucky heave of the line. I can't think how I happened to miscalculate the distance."

" It 's all right now," replied the owner, grimly ; " but the next time a job of that kind comes in your way I would advise you to let some one else undertake it. Now send for the nearest doctor as quickly as you can. Come, men, bear a hand and get these lads on deck !"

The dark-browed captain accepted this rebuke meekly, and was most active in doing everything possible for the restoration and comfort of those who had been so nearly drowned. At the end of an hour Gale was going about his accustomed duties, looking a little pale and feeling somewhat shaky, but not otherwise suffering any ill effects from his recent experience. At the same time the lad whom he had so bravely rescued had been restored to consciousness and lay sleeping quietly in a comfortable

berth. Manuel, the cabin boy and author of all the mischief, had disappeared, nor did he ever again show his face aboard the *Egret*.

When Mr. Almy came down to the yacht the next morning, to see if she were ready to receive her passengers and start on her cruise, he did not, for a moment, recognize the neat-appearing lad whom he found sweeping the cabin floor.

“Who are you?” he inquired.

“I ’m Aleck Penrose, sir,” replied the boy, with a quick flush mounting to his pale cheeks. “Mr. Ellicot said I was to stay here and make myself useful till Mr. Almy came, and perhaps he would give me the berth of cabin boy in place of the other who has n’t come back.”

“He ’d better not, the young rascal!” growled the yacht owner. Then more kindly he continued: “So you are the lad whom my mate jumped overboard after, are you? Judging from your appearance the ducking seems to have done you good.”

“I expect it ’s the eating, sir, for I had n’t eaten anything for nearly two days.”

“Good gracious, boy! You don’t mean to say that you were starving? Where are your parents?”

“Dead, sir.”

“Where do you live, then?”

“I lived with my aunt, sir; but she was sick and I had to take care of her till she died too. Then the landlord took everything we had for rent and turned me out, so now I have n’t any relatives in the world but a little sister who lives with a family in the country.”

“Have you always lived in the city?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Can you read and write?”

“Oh, yes, sir. I’ve always gone to school.”

“Do you know anything about yachts or sailing?”

“No, sir, I’m afraid not; but I know a lot about housekeeping and tidying up places.”

“Well,” laughed Mr. Almy, “I don’t know but what that is more important, considering the berth that you have applied for, and for want of a better, I guess I’ll take you along as cabin boy.”

“Oh, thank you, sir!” exclaimed the lad, with a beaming face. “I’ll do my very best, and learn as fast as ever I can.”

Two hours later the yacht was under way, and, with the owner and his family on board, was stand-

ing down Boston harbor toward the open sea and the far away tropic islands for which she was bound. It was now December, and the day, though clear and bright, was so cold that, after the excitement of the start had worn off, the passengers were glad to gather about the cheerful fire blazing in an open grate in the big, comfortable cabin. The breeze being steady and favorable, the watch on deck was kept warm and busy getting sail after sail hoisted and sheeted home, until the yacht was under racing canvas, and speeding along as though she too were in a hurry to escape from cold weather.

CHAPTER VIII.

CRUISING AMONG TROPIC ISLANDS.

THE voyage to the Bahamas was uneventful, and the following four months were happily spent in cruising among those coral islets, and down through the Windward and Leeward groups as far as Trinidad. Nor was the whole of this time spent in sailing. Often for days, and sometimes for a week at a time, the *Egret* would lie quietly at anchor in some snug harbor, while her passengers explored the adjacent water in the swift naphtha launch that formed part of her equipment, or visited points of interest on shore.

Of the crew none enjoyed the cruise so much as did the mate and cabin boy, to whom everything relating to this tropic experience was new and delightful. The former, who was a prime favorite with the Almys, always went in charge of the launch, and was treated by his employer more as a

friend and companion, than as one whose services were hired. Thus he saw nearly everything that was worth seeing, and acquired a vast amount of useful knowledge concerning the people and products of the islands. Much of this he imparted to Aleck Penrose who, ever since the day of his gallant rescue by the young mate, had been his loyal friend and ardent admirer. In consequence of the coolness with which Captain Staver had treated his second in command, ever since the latter had refused to join in his scheme for supplying the Haytian rebels with arms, Gale was forced to find his most intimate companion in the cabin boy. Nor did he have occasion to regret, for Penrose, as he was called, proved to be an exceptionally bright and entertaining lad. He had improved wonderfully in personal appearance, the result of being well fed and kindly treated, and now his happy face and well developed figure, were in striking contrast to what he had exhibited when Gale first saw him seated on the string-piece of an East Boston wharf. Only the captain seemed to have taken a dislike to the lad, and invariably spoke to him harshly. For this reason Gale took especial pains to show his friendship toward the boy.

He even tried to teach him the rudiments of seamanship, and insisted upon his learning to row, as well as to gain an understanding of the management of a small boat under sail. He wanted also to teach the boy to swim; but in this he could not succeed, for Penrose had an unconquerable aversion to the water, that no amount of persuasion or ridicule could overcome. He only learned what he did concerning boats, out of pure love and gratitude toward his instructor, and was never more unhappy than when he found himself in one, and thus uncomfortably close to the sea. In his own department, that of the cabin, he performed his duties with such quickness and dexterity, that Mr. Almy declared him to be the best cabin boy he had ever shipped.

In all their cruising they had not touched at the island of Hayti, though they had passed it twice. For some reason Mr. Almy did not seem inclined to stop there, in spite of the captain's suggestions that it would be a pleasant place to visit. The latter had proved himself a most excellent navigator, as well as a skilful pilot of the dangerous West Indian waters. For all that, however, his employer could not bring himself to a liking for him, and held as

little intercourse with him as possible. This was greatly resented by the man, and served to intensify his jealousy of the young mate, whose treatment by Mr. Almy was in such marked contrast to his own.

The first of April found the *Egret* lying in the harbor of Havana. Here her owner announced his intention of travelling overland, with his family, from one end of Cuba to the other, and gave orders that the yacht should proceed to Santiago, at the extreme eastern point of the island. There she was to await his coming, and prepare for her homeward voyage.

Not since the beginning of the cruise had Captain Staver seemed so pleased with anything, as he did at receiving this order. He at once became affable and agreeable to everybody, including his young mate, and went about his duties with his face wreathed in smiles. The crew seemed to partake of his feelings, and Gale wondered at the unusual atmosphere of good-nature that pervaded the whole yacht. As for himself he would have been much better pleased had he been ordered to accompany the Almys on their overland journey; but of course that was out of the question.

After the departure of the *Egret's* passengers he found new cause for surprise, in the haste shown by Captain Staver to get under way and start for Santiago. To him it seemed as though there were several good reasons why they should not leave their anchorage just then. In the first place, they could reach their destination in two or three days; while the Almys expected to be as many weeks on their journey. Then the barometer was falling and the weather looked threatening. They were also in need of fresh water. He ventured to suggest these things to the captain, who only answered sharply: "I know my own business, sir."

So they sailed out under the frowning walls of the Moro, shortly before sunset, and that night were caught in a tropical tempest that very nearly sent the good yacht *Egret* to the bottom. For two days it raged, and when, toward the close of the second day it broke, allowing the sun to shine out for a few minutes before setting, the yacht was found to be sadly battered, though still stanch and seaworthy. For twenty-four hours she had been hove to; but now, though the wind still blew a gale, and there was a huge sea running, Captain Staver determined

to put her again on her course. As he was about to issue the necessary orders, there came a cry of "Wreck ! Wreck astern !" and he waited to have a look at it. The wreck was that of a dismasted vessel, floating very low in the water, and was only to be seen when both they and it were hove up on top of a sea.

As they drifted faster than it they were soon able to distinguish objects on its deck, and among them was the figure of a man who was waving his arms wildly to attract their attention.

"Shall I order a boat cleared away, sir?" asked Gale, whose warm-hearted impulse was to hasten to the assistance of this human being in such deadly peril.

For a moment the captain did not answer, but continued to regard the wreck steadily through his glasses. Then he lowered them with a disgusted expression on his face, and said : "No. It's only a 'nigger' as I thought, and I'm not going to risk white men's lives for him."

"Only a 'nigger'!" cried Gale, in amazement. "Do you mean to say, sir, that you would leave the man to his fate, merely because he happens to have a black skin?"

"That 's just what I do mean," answered the captain, coolly.

"Then, sir, I denounce your conduct as an outrage against humanity, and demand that you allow me to go to his relief. In case you refuse, I shall brand you as a murderer in every port we enter."

"Oh, you can go if you want to," replied the captain; "but I forbid a man of the crew to go with you."

"Then I will go alone," said Gale, calmly.

A minute later the gig, which was the lightest boat on the yacht, was lowered, with the young mate as its sole occupant. Just as he was shoving off, there was a loud cry on deck, and Aleck Penrose, the cabin boy, leaped from the yacht's rail into the boat, exclaiming, "You sha'n't go to your death alone, Gale, not while I am alive to go with you!"

So sudden and unexpected was the boy's action, that before Gale could recover from his astonishment a big sea had swept the light boat far astern of the yacht, and it was too late to put back. Making the best of the situation, he bade Aleck take the tiller, while he devoted his entire energies to pulling toward the wreck. They were now abreast of the

unfortunate vessel, and but a short distance from it ; but even to pass over that brief space, filled as it was with mountainous billows, required all the skill and strength that the young sailor from Maine could command. In this position Aleck's steering was of the greatest service, and as he sat there, cool and alert, without exhibiting a trace of fear or excitement, it seemed incredible that he could be the same boy who had refused to learn to swim, because of his timidity and horror of the water. In that cockle-shell of a boat, threatened each instant with destruction, he appeared as unconscious of danger as though he were standing on dry land.

The task was finally accomplished, and the wreck reached. In the comparatively smooth water under its lee, Gale had little difficulty in catching a line flung to him from it. In another moment the man whom he had ventured so much to rescue, a young negro about his own age, black as jet, and of splendid physical proportions, had slid down the rope into the boat. His first words were, "Agua, senior ! Agua !"

A small breaker, filled with fresh water, was always kept in each of the *Egret's* boats and from

the one that had been lashed under a thwart in the gig, the young negro now took such a prodigious draught that it seemed as though he would empty it before becoming satisfied.

"Is there any one else on board?" asked Gale, when he at length put down the breaker.

"No, sah," answered the negro, in fairly good English. "I 'se de only one lef'. All de others done swep' off and drown."

"Then let us get back to the yacht as quickly as possible. You can pull an oar, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, sah!" replied the other, with a broad grin that revealed a glistening row of teeth, "Cæsar kin pull like a tarpum fish."

The young mate looked up curiously at the sound of this name, but had no time to consider it just then. An oar was put into the negro's hands, and Gale was about to cast off from the wreck, when his attention was arrested by a startled exclamation from Aleck Penrose.

"Gale, look, quick! The *Egret* is leaving us!" cried the boy.

Gale looked, and could hardly believe his eyes. He rubbed them and looked again. Yes, there

could be no doubt of it. The yacht, under three-reefed lower sails, was certainly headed on her course. She was already at a considerable distance from them, and was rapidly increasing it. They were cruelly, heartlessly, abandoned to their fate.



THE RESCUE OF CÆSAR.

CHAPTER IX.

ABANDONED AT SEA.

STANDING upright in the tossing boat, motionless and without speaking, Gale Ellicot gazed after the white sails of the vanishing yacht. He was stunned by the magnitude of the catastrophe that had overtaken him. The deliberate cruelty of their desertion was incredible to the young mate. Such a thing was unknown and unheard of in all his experience. It could not be true. The yacht must still put about and come for them. With straining eyes he watched her until the last faint glimmer of her sails was merged in the white crests of the tumbling billows, and she vanished in the gathering gloom of night. Then the strong young spirit gave way, and, dropping to a thwart, Gale buried his face in his hands.

“Cheer up, Gale !” cried a voice in his ear, while at the same moment Aleck’s arm was thrown lovingly

across his shoulders. "We are not lost yet, even if those cowards have deserted us. As for myself, I'd a heap rather be here with you, than there with them. They are going to get into trouble and I know it. Captain Staver thought I was asleep and did n't hear, or would n't understand his Spanish if I did, when, the last night we were in Havana he talked with old José about the guns and cartridges under the cabin floor. They spoke of some one they would have to get rid of too, but did n't mention his name. Now I think it must have been you, and they are going to turn pirates, and every one of them will be hung. I was going to tell you the very first chance I got, but the storm scared me so that I forgot all about it. We'll come out of this all right, somehow, see if we don't, and I think we ought to be glad that we can't be hung for pirates, anyhow."

These words had the desired effect of completely changing Gale's current of thought; even before Aleck finished speaking, he lifted his head and was listening intently.

"Guns, did you say, and cartridges under the cabin floor?" he asked, as a light began to break on

the situation. "Then they got them aboard after all without my knowing it, and they are going to take them to Hayti. What a fool I was not to find it out before. That, then, is the reason why Captain Staver has been so happy lately, and was in such a hurry to be off, and was so willing to get rid of me. Hayti lies just east of Cuba. They can easily go there, discharge their concealed cargo, and get to Santiago before Mr. Almy does, without anybody being the wiser. Oh, what a fool I was not to speak to him about it! And now I've gone and got you into this wretched fix too. I declare, Penrose, it's too bad!"

"No it is n't," said the boy, stoutly. "It's just right as it is. Besides, you did n't get me into this fix. I came into it of my own accord, and I'd do the very same thing again. But, Gale, don't you think we'd better climb up on the wreck? We won't be so horribly close to the water as we are here, and I'm awfully afraid of it in the dark."

"Right you are, my boy," replied Gale, with renewed cheerfulness. "I was worse than a baby to be so cast down. While there's life there's hope. We have plenty of life left, so why should n't we

have lots of hope? As you say, the wreck looks to be a more comfortable place to spend the night in than this boat, and I don't believe it's likely to sink for a good while yet. Hello there, you black fellow—what's your name, Cæsar or Cæsar's ghost? Pull us up to your ship, will you, and invite us aboard. It would n't be polite, you know, to leave your visitors out here all night."

With a broad grin illuminating his face, the black did as directed. Although he was greatly disappointed at having his hopes of a rescue dashed so unexpectedly, and was utterly at a loss to understand the situation of affairs, he was so refreshed by the water, for which he had been perishing, and so rejoiced to have companions in misfortune, that his spirits rose to the occasion. He even laughed heartily at Aleck's awkward attempts to climb the rope leading to the wreck. In these attempts the ex-cabin boy failed so utterly, that they were finally obliged to knot a line under his arms, by which the negro easily hauled him up while Gale steadied the boat.

As the latter also stepped from the frail craft, after having handed out the precious water breaker,

and before the boat could be allowed to drop to a safe distance astern, it was lifted on the crest of a sea and hurled so violently against the wreck that its slight frame was crushed like an egg-shell, and it almost instantly sank.

At this both Gale and the negro uttered cries of dismay; but Aleck said he was glad of it, for he had been frightened almost to death in the thing, and now he would n't be obliged to trust himself to it again.

The wreck on which the young sailors now found themselves was that of a large Cuban fishing smack, which had been schooner rigged. She had been turtling on the east coast, and was returning to Havana when she was thrown on her beam ends and dismasted by the first blast of the hurricane, which struck her with much greater fury than it had the yacht. Thinking that she was about to founder, her crew had made a rush for the boats. These were quickly swamped, and only the negro, by the full exercise of his wonderful strength, had been able to regain the wreck by swimming. Now, though the after part of the schooner was so low in the water that its rail was nearly awash, her bows,

for some unexplained reason, still floated high. For two days and nights the negro had drifted alone, and at the mercy of the elements. He had been constantly wet by the seas that dashed over him, and had suffered keenly from thirst. Now the storm had so abated that the waves no longer swept over the forward part of the deck, and there the three young sailors could remain in comparative comfort.

As darkness came on and the stars shone out in unclouded splendor, the wind sank to a steady breeze and the sea rapidly subsided. All three of the lads shivered as the cool night air penetrated their soaked clothing, and all of them were very hungry, while the negro was ravenous. At length he descended into the forecastle, where for some time he groped about, wading through the water that swashed above the floor to a depth of several feet. When he reappeared he bore in one hand an axe, and in the other a great bunch of what looked like dried yellow plums or persimmons. These he proceeded to eat, after first offering to share them with his companions. They each tried one, but even their hunger could not induce them to swallow another

of the evil-smelling things. The dried plums, as they thought them, were really the yolks of unlaidd eggs taken from the bodies of dead turtles. By the natives of those southern islands these "yellows," as they are called, are esteemed a great delicacy, but their smell alone generally deters a stranger from testing them further.

After taking the edge off his appetite with these unsavory eggs, the negro curled himself up in the eyes of the bow, and, with the happy carelessness of his race, almost immediately fell asleep. Sitting as close together as possible for warmth, Gale and Aleck talked of their situation and studied the stars for several hours. Gale pointed out the Southern Cross, sunk low on one horizon, and the North Star above the other. This led him to thoughts of his own far away home, and when at last he too fell asleep some time after Aleck had done so, it was to dream of the little brown cottage and its loved inmates.

So, bearing its sleeping passengers in safety, the water-logged wreck drifted on through the night. Minor currents urged it this way and that, but always the powerful tide of the mighty gulf stream

bore it steadily forward. Some time after midnight it was deflected towards the Florida coast by the young flood, and on the very top of the tide it took bottom, on an outlying reef, so gently that none of the sleepers was awakened by the slight shock. By this time the breeze had died out, and the heaving bosom of the sea was as unruffled as a mirror.



STRANDED ON A REEF.

CHAPTER X.

ESCAPING FROM THE WRECK.

AT length Gale awoke with a start, rubbed his eyes and gazed about him in bewilderment. He was stiff and lame from lying so long in the dampness on his hard couch, and he could not at first recognize his surroundings. He wondered at the steadiness of the wreck, and rising to his feet looked over the rail to discover its meaning. The eastern sky was aglow with the marvellous coloring of sunrise, and the opal-tinted waters gleamed with a satiny sheen.

Gazing down into the clear depths he could see a coral bottom, above which waved the gorgeous crimsons and purples of feathery sea fans. Then he knew the wreck was on a reef, but he had no more knowledge of where it was located than the boy who still lay sleeping at his feet. A few miles away across the tinted waters, rose the misty outline of an un-

known land. On all sides great fish glistening like bars of molten silver and dripping as with diamonds, leaped high into the air as though rejoicing in the glory of the new-born day. The young mate's spirits rose as he gazed about him, and with a loud shout he startled his companions into such sudden wakefulness that Aleck bumped his head against the bulwarks and sat up rubbing it ruefully, while the negro sprang to his feet muttering some Spanish words to the effect that he would be on deck in a minute.

"Come, bear a hand, hearties!" cried Gale, laughing at their confusion. "Here we are hard and fast aground with land in sight, and breakfast not ready yet. How about those ill-smelling plums of yours, Cæsar? Are there any left? By holding my nose and shutting my eyes I believe I might manage to swallow a few, and I must stow something away inside, for I feel as empty as a last year's bird's nest."

With a grin lighting his sable features, the negro produced the considerable quantity of "yellows" still remaining. Both Gale and Aleck managed to swallow enough of them to take the edge off their appetites, while Cæsar ate greedily all that were left.

There was still water enough in the breaker to wash these down, and to refresh them greatly.

“Now, fellows, let ’s get ready to go ashore,” said Gale, when this scanty meal was finished. “Perhaps we can get there and find a hotel by dinner-time. Besides, I am anxious to send a few telegrams as soon as possible.”

“How are you going to get there?” asked Aleck, gazing wistfully at the distant land.

“The same way Robinson Crusoe did; by means of a raft,” was the reply.

“And do you really think we will find people there? White people I mean.”

“I should n’t be surprised, and perhaps they will send a tug out for us; but it won’t do to wait for them. The tide is running out now and we must be ready to take advantage of the very first of the flood. So let ’s look alive and get to work on our raft.”

With the wonderful buoyancy of youth, that refuses to be suppressed even by the most adverse circumstances, and aided by those great stimulants of happiness, plenty of hard work, and full occupation for their minds, the three castaways set merrily

to work, exchanging jokes and indulging in the most extravagant conjectures concerning who and what they should find on reaching land, as they did so.

At first sight the schooner appeared to be stripped of everything from which they might construct a raft; but when they got the main hatch off they found a couple of barrels floating in the hold. These, emptied of their water and plugged made a very buoyant foundation. To them was added the main hatch, the outer portion of the bowsprit, which after half an hour's hard work with the axe Gale managed to chop off, and a few bits of the vessel's lighter woodwork. Gale and Cæsar, who were both provided with sheath knives, that they carried in their belts, built the raft; while Aleck explored the fore-castle, which the falling tide left comparatively accessible, and brought up whatever he could discover of value in it. Thus he soon had spread on deck several bags of sailor's clothing, a roll of canvas, an iron pot, a number of "grains" or fish spears, and two stout fishing lines with hooks attached, besides a variety of other less useful articles.

To his great disappointment he could find no provisions, and Cæsar said that as the schooner was

just ending a long cruise when she was wrecked there had been very little of anything to eat left on board.

At the end of three hours of hard work the raft was completed, and was laden with everything that Aleck had found, besides all the ropes and rigging that had still remained on the schooner. The sun was now beating down with a fervent heat, but in the afternoon when the tide turned this was pleasantly tempered by a light sea breeze, that promised to aid them materially on their passage towards the land. Gale even managed to rig up a mast, and a yard to which they bent an apology for a sail made of a square bit cut from the roll of canvas. This with a plank, fixed to the after end of the raft in such a way that it formed a clumsy steering oar, completed their equipment.

When all was ready and they stepped aboard their rude craft, it was found to be capable of bearing them, but that was all. Its deck was very nearly awash, while the whole affair proved so loose-jointed and unseaworthy, that to poor Aleck it seemed a most foolhardy and dangerous thing to trust themselves to it. As the only alternative was to remain behind, he reluctantly seated himself on

it, and with a resigned expression prepared to await whatever fate might hold in store for him.

In spite of its clumsy appearance the raft, aided by a favoring breeze and a strong current, made such good progress that within an hour after leaving the wreck they were only a couple of miles from the land for which they were heading, and which now proved to be an island.

Suddenly Cæsar, who was stationed at the forward end of the raft, called out to Gale, who was steering, "Look out, Cap'n! Dar 's a reef right ahead!"

It was too late to do anything, and the next minute they were rubbing and scraping over a narrow sand-bar that seemed to extend to the shore. In another moment the raft slid into deep water; but it was so badly wrenched that it seemed on the point of going to pieces, and they no longer dared carry sail. On the opposite side of the channel in which they now floated, and which was not more than twenty yards wide, they saw another bar, also extending to the land, so there was nothing for them to do but to drift up the channel they were in wherever it might lead.

In the meantime Aleck had become so reassured by the safe sailing of the earlier portion of the voyage, that he had thrown overboard a hook, baited with a bit of white rag, in the hope of catching one of the fish that swarmed about them, and had made the inner end of the line fast about his wrist. Now, forgetful of this, he, with the others, watched eagerly the land they were approaching. Finally the current swept them into a narrow opening between two islands, and they could see open water beyond. They could not afford to be carried past the only bit of land within sight, and so, as they floated close to the left-hand shore, the negro, with a line knotted about his waist, sprang overboard and swam toward it. At the same instant there came a tremendous tug at Aleck's wrist, and he, already partly overbalanced by Cæsar's sudden movement, lost his footing and also plunged into the water, uttering a loud cry as he disappeared. Without an instant's hesitation Gale sprang after him, while the raft separated into its component parts.

It was fortunate that all this happened close to the shore ; for, with the raft tugging at the negro, and a big fish tugging at Aleck, their situation

would have been hopeless had they been a few yards farther out in the stream.

When they did finally reach land, and stood dripping and panting on the rocky bank, Aleck's first exclamation was: "I wish I might never see another drop of salt water again, nor step off of dry land again as long as I live. Oh, you monster! You 'd drag me in again, would you?"

The latter part of this speech was addressed to the fish which was still tugging at the line attached to the boy's wrist, and which when landed proved to be a fine barracouta weighing at least twenty pounds. At the same time Cæsar pulled in all that remained of the raft, which was the main hatch with the axe lying on it. All the rest of their possessions had drifted far beyond their reach or gone to the bottom.

While his companions were thus engaged, Gale was gazing curiously at the remains of what had evidently been a ship's ways that rested half in the water, near the mouth of a small stream. A moment later, without stopping to bemoan their losses in this second shipwreck, he started to walk up along the bank of the stream, toward the interior of the island, and directly afterwards the others followed him.



“A BLACK FIGURE FLUNG ITSELF ON ITS KNEES BEFORE HIM.”

The young mate's face wore a puzzled and expectant expression, and he walked like one in a dream. As he came to a broad opening in the forest, in the centre of which lay a small, spring-fed lake, he stood still and gazed about him with an air of blank amazement.

At length he said aloud : " Well ! If this is n't Sir Richard Allanson's island, then my name is n't Gale Ellicot, that 's all ! "

" Sir Richard Allanson ! " cried a voice behind him. " You know him ? "

" Know him ! Of course I do ! " answered Gale. " He was my great-great-grandfather ! "

Then a black figure flung itself on its knees before him ; and, in joyful accents, the young negro exclaimed :

" Sir Rich' you' granfodder ! Den you know Black Cæsar ! You know Kabele, my granfodder ! Now you kill me ! Kill you' pore slave, an' he be happy foreber an' eber ! "

Looking at this strange tableau in open-eyed wonder, Aleck Penrose asked himself if they had both gone crazy, and what he had better do under the circumstances ?

CHAPTER XI.

ON BLACK CÆSAR'S ISLAND.

GALE had not quite so much reason for astonishment as Aleck Penrose; for, from the minute of setting foot on the island, it had seemed familiar to him. It had at once suggested the story of Sir Richard Allanson that he had read on that last day at home, but which had been wellnigh forgotten in the rush of succeeding events. It had been vaguely recalled by the wreck, the raft, and their passage from the reef; but, on reaching the island, all its details flashed into his mind, and he had felt almost certain that this was the very place on which his ancestor had been cast away more than a century before. The sight of the little lake, with its great spring boiling up from a basin of white coral, had confirmed his belief. Now, however, to find himself in company with a direct descendant of that very Black Cæsar to whom his great ancestor had owed

his life, and who on his part had also owed so much to his great-grandfather, seemed almost incredible.

“Do you mean to say,” he asked of the kneeling figure before him, “that Kabele, the son of Black Cæsar the pirate, was your grandfather?”

“Yes, he my fodder, my granfoder, my great-granfoder.”

“Have you ever been here before?”

“No, my fodder lib here when he pickaninny, but de Spanish war-man come, catch 'em, kill 'em, take 'em away.”

“That accounts for the end of the colony then. But why do you want me to kill you?”

“Black Cæsar tell Kabele, Kabele tell my fodder, my fodder tell me to die any time for Sir Rich' Allason. Him berry good man. He your fodder, Black Cæsar my fodder; dey ready to die for each oder. I ready to die for you; you kill me dat make it all right.”

“Well!” laughed Gale, extending his hand, to the negro, “you are a good, faithful fellow, and I'm glad to have you for a friend. Of course, if you wish it very much I'll kill you when I get ready; but just now I'd rather have you live and hunt

'round for something to eat. We shall all be dead of starvation before morning if we don't find food of some kind."

"Will you please tell me——" began Aleck, who had been growing more and more bewildered by what he heard.

"Yes, old man; I 'll tell you all about it," interrupted Gale, "after we 've had supper; but I 'd rather eat that fish of yours raw than try to tell anything now. Oh! if we only had a fire!"

"I kin get fire quick," said Cæsar, eagerly; and suiting his actions to his words, he took from a small bag, made of a bladder, that hung from his neck, a steel and a bit of flint. In another moment he had found a handful of punk, or dry rotten wood, and ignited it with a spark struck from his flint. He swung it rapidly about his head until a tiny flame appeared, and applying this to a sliver of torchwood, which grew about them in abundance, he quickly had a fine blaze.

The others gave a cheer as they saw this, the first and most important of their wants, so readily supplied. Then all hands set to work; Gale taking the axe and going for a supply of dry firewood, Aleck



“ THEN ALL HANDS SET TO WORK.”

going to clean and prepare his barracouta, and Cæsar beginning the construction of a brush and palm-leaf hut in which they might be sheltered from the heavy night dews.

At the end of an hour, or just as the sun was setting, they felt that they had good cause to regard the results of their labor with satisfaction. Cæsar had built a most comfortable-looking hut, enclosed on three sides and open on the fourth, which was toward the fire. Gale had not only collected a pile of logs sufficient to keep the fire going all night if necessary, but had also gathered a quantity of soft Spanish moss, which he spread thickly over the floor of the hut. Aleck had cut a dozen generous slices from his big fish, and broiled them over a bed of glowing coals until they were done to a turn, and their appetizing fragrance pervaded the whole place.

Certainly no meal was ever more acceptable than that rudely prepared fish-supper, nor did three young fellows ever sit down to one with greater alacrity or more hearty appetites. They had palmetto-leaves for plates, and their fingers for forks. As cups had not been included in their list of table furnishings, they were every now and then obliged to run to the

spring for a drink of its cool water, especially when they undertook to eat a bit of fish too recently taken from the coals. To Cæsar this style of feasting seemed perfectly natural, for in all his life he had rarely known any other. He only regretted the absence of the gourds or cocoanut shells that he had been accustomed to use in the place of cups, and promised to supply this deficiency the next day. To the others it possessed all the charm of novelty, and they began to think their lines had fallen in very pleasant places.

At first they were too busy satisfying their hunger to talk ; but after a while they began to relate the several discoveries they had already made. Only a short distance from where they were Gale had found an ancient stone wall, overgrown with a tangle of vines, and apparently enclosing a field. He had not had time to see what the field contained, but proposed to do so in the morning. Aleck had found an extensive assortment of badly rusted anchors, chains, rings, etc., besides a quantity of copper bolts and sheathing, near the place where they had landed. Cæsar had discovered that the spring-fed pond abounded in fish, and had already planned a trap to

be set in the narrowest part of the stream flowing from it.

One of the great beauties of this supper was that there were no dishes to be washed when it was over, the plates being disposed of by the simple act of tossing them into the fire. As the shadows of night gathered about them, the wind also rose, and the air was filled with the sound of its rushing among the tree-tops. This only added to their sense of security and comfort, and made them more than ever thankful that they were not still on the wreck.

As they lay on their couches of moss, gazing into the dancing flames of the fire, and enjoying its warmth, which the damp night-chill made very acceptable, Aleck reminded Gale of his promise to explain the mysterious scene between him and Cæsar. The young sailor willingly satisfied the boy's curiosity, and told, as well as he could remember it, the story of his great-grandfather's experience on the Spanish treasure ship, in company with Black Cæsar and his fellows.

Cæsar listened to the tale with even greater interest than Aleck, and expressed his approval by an

occasional exclamation of "Dat 's so!" or "Dem 's de berry words!"

"But did n't anybody ever find the treasure ship?" asked Aleck when the story came to an end. To this boy, who had all his life known only the deepest poverty, the fact that the Spanish galleon had been laden with gold and silver seemed a most wonderful thing, and he hated to think of it as lost beyond recovery.

"Not that I know of," answered Gale. "How is it, Cæsar? Did you ever hear any of your folks say anything about finding the *Aztec*?"

"No, I don't hear anyting. My people would n't fin' dat ole ship anyhow. Dey say it done bin harnted."

"I expect it is haunted by mermaids and all sorts of sea-monsters by this time," laughed Gale, "or rather I expect it was, for it must have dropped to pieces long ago."

"Then you don't think there is any chance of our finding it," said Aleck in a tone of deep disappointment.

"Of course not. You might as well try to find Noah's ark."

Notwithstanding the confidence with which he made this assertion, Gale mentally determined to keep a sharp look-out for any indications of gold or silver on the shores of the island; while Aleck openly announced his intention of beginning a search for the long-lost galleon the very next day. So they talked of treasure ships and pirates until, one by one, they dropped asleep, and their dreams took up the thread of their waking thoughts.

The fire had burned itself out, and the night was very dark, when Gale was awakened by Aleck, who said in a low, frightened tone: "Oh, Gale! I can't stand it any longer alone, and just had to wake you. I've been hearing the most awful sounds."

"Such as what?" asked Gale.

"I don't know exactly; cries of distress and yells."

"Oh, pshaw! Probably an owl."

"No, indeed! It was louder than a hundred owls."

"Wind through the trees, then?"

"I tell you——There! Hear that!"

And Gale did hear a long-drawn moaning, followed by a wild shriek that died away in a mourn-

ful wail. It was not only startling, but absolutely blood-curdling, and he no longer wondered at Aleck's terror. After an interval of perhaps a minute it was repeated louder than before, and the lad's heart almost stopped its beating as he listened.

"It 's de harnts! De ghosses ob de ole ship!" whispered Cæsar, who had also been awakened by the awful sounds, and whose teeth were chattering with terror.

"Nonsense!" answered Gale, stoutly, "It 's some wild beast in distress. I 'm going to have a light, so that if he comes this way we can at least see him."

Thus saying, he stepped from the hut and began throwing wood on the smouldering embers of the fire. With its cheerful blaze their courage was somewhat restored, and, though the sounds were still heard at intervals, they did not seem quite so terrifying. After a while they grew fainter, and at length ceased entirely, but the castaways had been too thoroughly frightened into wakefulness for sleep to again visit them that night. So they watched their fire, and talked of what they had heard until daylight, which fortunately was not long in coming.

CHAPTER XII.

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF ALECK'S COMPANIONS.

BY sunrise of the next morning the castaways had eaten a hastily prepared breakfast of barracouta, which Gale remarked was becoming monotonous as a steady diet, and were ready to start on their exploration of the island.

First they stopped to finish the fish-trap on which Gale and Cæsar had been at work while Penrose prepared breakfast. Then, at his suggestion, they visited the pile of old junk near the mouth of the stream, to see what it could furnish in the way of weapons of defence in case they met with any wild beasts. They could discover nothing better suited to their purpose than some long copper bolts which would answer admirably as clubs, and with which both Gale and Aleck armed themselves.

Cæsar regarded these with disdain, and preferred to trust to his long, keen-edged knife. Besides he

had discovered an old turtle "peg," which is a sort of a spear having a short point provided with a shoulder that prevents it from sinking very far through the upper shell of a turtle. The shell contracts when pierced by such a peg, and holds it so firmly that the animal cannot pull away from it. The upper part of the peg is a socket into which may be loosely thrust a long pole or spear handle. When the peg is in use a stout line is made fast to it, and as the shaft is withdrawn after delivering a blow, the animal is thus secured. By a little searching among the driftwood on the beach, Cæsar found a slender pole that would answer for a shaft. Then making one end of Aleck's stout fish-line fast to the peg, he declared himself ready for business, and promised them turtle steaks for dinner.

First they directed their steps toward the stone wall that Gale had seen the evening before. They found that it enclosed a cleared field of considerable extent, and to their amazement discovered that this not only abounded in all sorts of edible products, that must have been planted within a few months, but that it had recently been cultivated.

"There must be people on the island after all!" exclaimed Aleck.

"It certainly looks that way," replied Gale. "I only hope they are white folks."

"Or black people," suggested Cæsar; "but I is powerful 'fraid dey is Injuns."

"Indians!" exclaimed the others, in a breath; while Gale added, "I never knew there were any Indians down here," and Aleck gazed apprehensively into the forest behind them.

"Yes, dey is," answered Cæsar, "an' dey is powerful fighters too." Then he told what he had learned from his father concerning the troubles of Black Cæsar's colony with the Indians from the mainland, who had made several attempts to drive them from the island.

"Oh, well!" said Gale, "I don't believe there are any Indians around here now. They must all have been killed or driven away during the Seminole war. At any rate I 'm going to have one of those pine-apples, Indians or no Indians."

So saying the young mate scrambled over the wall and cut a lusciously yellow and ripe-looking "pine" that he had spied in a patch on the other side. The

others followed his example, and all three declared the fruit to be the finest they had ever eaten. Besides pineapples, the field contained sweet-potatoes, tomatoes, squashes, melons, sugar-cane, and bananas, together with several cocoanut trees laden with fruit in all stages of development.

After their feast of pineapples they continued their exploration of the island to its farther end, without seeing any other fields or a trace of human occupation. Nor did they discover anything to explain the terrifying sounds of the night before. With the exception of birds, many of them of the most brilliant plumage, with which the forest abounded, they did not even find an animal of any description.

Toward the middle of the afternoon as they were returning to their own end of the island, and making their way along its outer coast, Aleck descried a sail beyond the outer reef, and they stopped to gaze at it with longing eyes. "If we only had a boat of some kind!" said Gale, and then they gazed in silence.

All at once Cæsar stepped quickly forward and hurled his spear at some object in the water. It

was a large green turtle, and the peg was fastened fairly in the middle of its shell. The handle, disengaged from its socket, floated on the water as the turtle dove, and the coils of the line ran rapidly out. Cæsar finally managed to check the animal, but could not pull it up nor even cause it to move a single inch. He waited a few minutes, expecting that the turtle would be forced to come to the surface for air, but it did not appear. At the end of ten minutes, Cæsar, who could not bear the thought of giving up his turtle and at the same time losing the peg with most of the line attached to it, declared his intention of going down and finding out what was the matter. As he had already proved himself nearly as much at home in the water as on land, the others made no objection. In another minute he had thrown off his scanty clothing, taken a straight header, and disappeared from their sight.

They watched eagerly for his reappearance. Slowly the seconds lengthened into a minute, and their eagerness was changed to anxiety. At the end of two minutes Gale was tearing off his clothes.

“Oh, Gale, don’t try it! You’ll only be drowned too!” cried Aleck.

"I must," answered the young sailor. "I could never hold up my head again if I left that poor fellow to his fate without an effort to save him. Don't worry. I'll be careful."

The next instant he too had disappeared, and Aleck was left alone. The tide was near its full, and a heavy swell, rolling in, dashed high on the rocky coast. As the lagging seconds passed, and neither of his companions rose from the watery depths that had swallowed them, the boy became filled with the terror of utter helplessness and loneliness. He threw himself down on the rocks and called aloud. For answer came the same weird wail, the unearthly shriek, and the long-drawn moaning that had appalled him in the darkness of the night before. Now it was close beside him, and its startling nearness increased its terrifying effect a hundred-fold. With the sounds came a rush of water and the lad was drenched to the skin.

He started to his feet with a wild cry, and had turned to flee from the dreadful spot, when he was suddenly arrested by a cheery call of "Hello, Aleck! Here we are!"

In an instant a great darkness seemed rolled aside



“THERE CAME A GREAT RUSH OF WATER AND THE LAD WAS DRENCHED TO THE SKIN.”

and the sunlight returned; but the boy's overwrought feelings gave way, and when, a second later, Gale emerged dripping from the water, Aleck sat limply on the ground, sobbing as though his heart would break.

"Why, my dear fellow! what is the matter?" cried his friend, hastily pulling on a portion of his clothing and bending over the lad. Just then came another of the unearthly sounds that had proved so full of terror to them all. Even Gale started as he heard it, though he had solved its mystery. It gave him a clue to a part of the lad's trouble, however, and he said soothingly:

"That's nothing to be alarmed at, old man. It's only a sea forcing the air through a blow-hole that leads into a great cavern directly beneath us. The entrance to it is under water; but it's big enough for a ship to sail into. Once inside, though, there's plenty of air, and any amount of floor space that the water does n't reach at all. I found Cæsar in there wrestling with his turtle and trying to get him from behind a bit of rock that the beast was hanging on to. So I stopped a minute to help him, and then hurried out to report to you for fear you

might grow uneasy. I did mean to go back, though, and explore the cavern, for it is the most curious place I ever saw."

"Oh, don't, Gale! Don't leave me again!" pleaded the boy, seizing the other's hand. "You can't imagine how awful it was when I thought you were both drowned, and heard those dreadful noises. Please don't go down there again!"

"All right, I won't, not just now, at any rate," replied Gale. "I'll only help Cæsar a bit with his turtle, and then we'll go home."

They had turtle steaks for dinner that evening as Cæsar had promised; they had baked sweet-potatoes to go with them, besides pineapples and bananas for dessert. In fact, from that time on, so long as they remained on the island, what with turtles, fish, oysters, plenty of vegetables and fruit, our three castaways had nothing to desire so far as an abundance and variety of food was concerned.

During the next week they were busily occupied in gathering supplies of these things, and in trying to hew and burn out a canoe from the trunk of a great cypress tree. They believed it to offer their only chance of escaping from the island, and as they

had seen several vessels at a distance, they were almost certain that with such a craft they could put off to one that would take them aboard.

Up to this time they had not seen a human being besides themselves, nor been in any way molested. They were constantly on the look-out, however, for the proprietors of the cultivated field, and only hoped they might get away before these took a notion to visit the island. In this they were doomed to disappointment, for one morning, Gale, who had gone as usual to the beach nearest the mainland to take a look, came running back with the startling news that three canoe-loads of Indians were rapidly approaching and would land in a few minutes.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAFETY UNDERNEATH THE SEA.

IF Gale and his companions had but known it, the Indians from the mainland, who were announced as approaching the island at the conclusion of the preceding chapter, were as peaceable and well-intentioned visitors as they could have had. They were part of a remnant who had been allowed to remain in the Everglades at the close of the Seminole war, and had been on friendly terms with the whites for many years. After the black colony had been removed from the island by a Spanish man-of-war, the Indians had taken possession of it, and had ever since cultivated its abandoned field. It was particularly valuable to them on account of its freedom from devastation by deer and other wild animals that caused them great annoyance on the mainland, and here they raised their choicest crops. They also picked up many a valuable bit of wreck-

age on the shores of the island, and consequently were in the habit of visiting it every few weeks, often remaining several days at a time.

All this was of course unknown to our three castaways. The only ideas that Gale and Aleck had of Indians had been gleaned from books of a sensational character prepared by writers wholly ignorant of their subject. Thus to them all Indians were bloodthirsty outlaws, devoted to scalps and plunder, and prepared to kill a white man at sight. Cæsar's knowledge was of much the same character, only that it had come to him through the traditions of a century, and these had gained new horrors with each repetition. To his imagination, therefore, an Indian was the most frightful thing on the face of the earth, and when Gale announced the approach of three canoe-loads of them, his black face assumed an ashen tinge, and for a moment he was overcome with fear.

"If we could only get our canoe into the water," suggested Penrose.

"But we can't," answered Gale, "and besides they would see us and catch us in no time if we did. No, there is but one thing for us to do, and that is to

take to the cavern, with the hope that these fellows won't stay here very long."

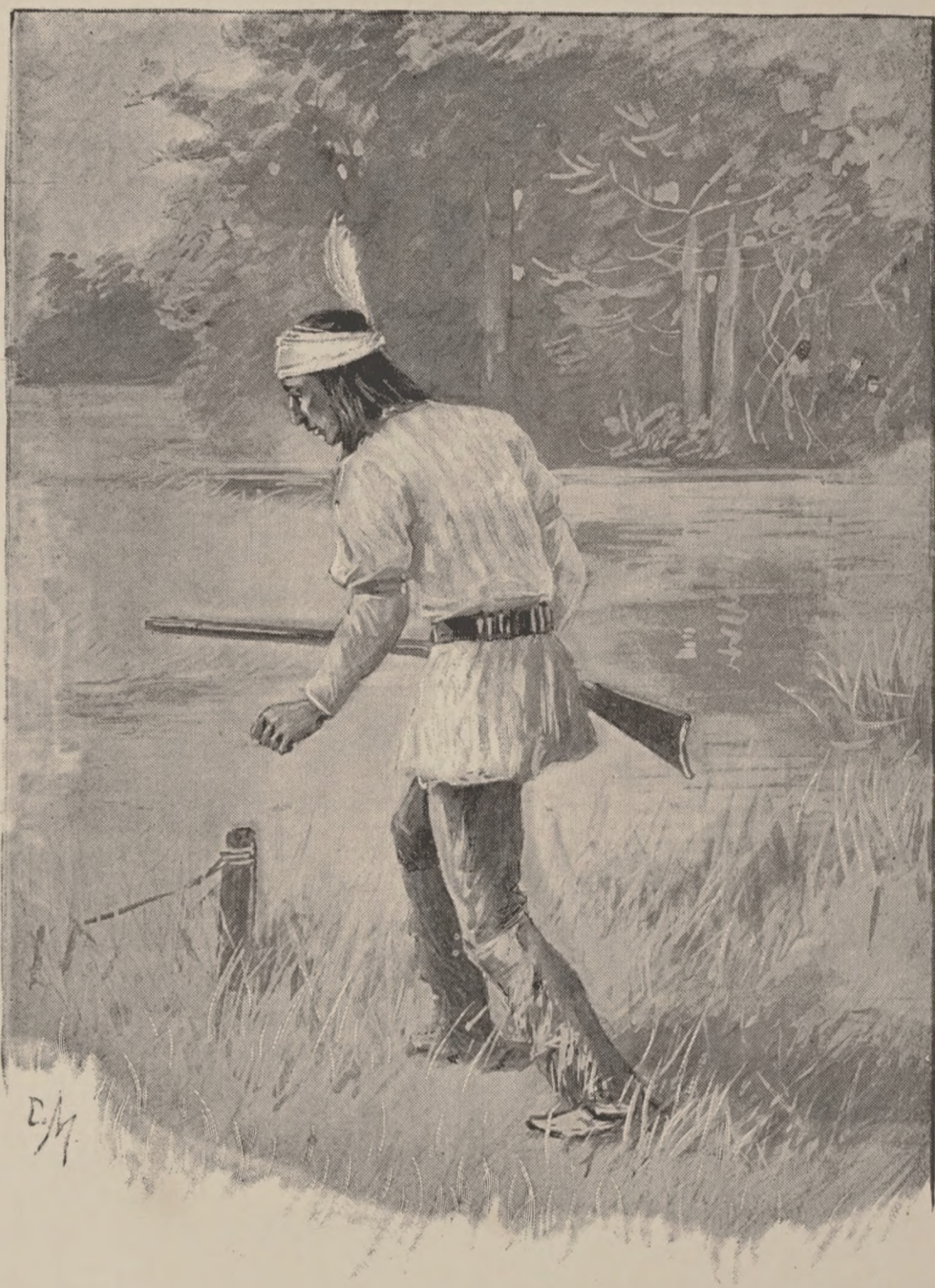
"Oh, Gale! Must we?" cried Aleck, to whom the submarine chambers thus proposed as a place of refuge possessed a terror little less than that of falling into the hands of the Indians.

"Yes, there is nothing else for it, and the quicker we get there the better, for I hear them now at the mouth of the creek."

Aleck also heard the sound of many voices and it decided him at once. "All right," he said, "lead on and we'll follow you, only I won't promise to go into the cavern."

"Come then," said Gale, picking up the axe and starting toward the edge of the forest with it. "Cæsar, you bring the water breaker."

A minute later they had disappeared in the thick underbrush that bounded one side of the lake, and almost at the same time the foremost of the Indians entered the clearing from the opposite side. The fugitives paused in their flight and peered through the bushes long enough to catch a glimpse of him, as he stopped to examine their fish-trap in the stream. He was a tall, finely built fellow, wearing on his



“ HE STOPPED TO EXAMINE THEIR FISH-TRAP.”

head a gaudy handkerchief in which was thrust a snow-white egret plume. He also wore a gay calico shirt belted about the waist, and in his hand he carried a rifle.

As the boys looked they saw him joined by several companions who, after a momentary inspection of the fish-trap, advanced into the clearing with the evident expectation of discovering there the unknown invaders of their territory. At this the fugitives turned and hastened as rapidly as possible in the direction of the cavern.

When they reached the rocks above its entrance the negro at once sprang overboard, taking the breaker of fresh water with him. Gale and Penrose removed their clothing and thrust it into the blow-hole, which, as the tide was low and the sea smooth, answered the purpose of a small entrance to the chambers beneath. They pushed the things down with a stick, until Cæsar was able to reach them from the inside. Thus they were assured of a supply of dry clothing after they should have made their watery entrance into their place of refuge. Gale also had the forethought to send down a small quantity of dry sticks and punk with a view to future fire-making.

Then Cæsar re-appeared, and poor Aleck was told that they were ready to take him below.

“I can’t go!” exclaimed the boy, shuddering and drawing back from the water’s edge, “I shall die, I know I shall!”

“But you must,” said Gale somewhat impatiently. “There is n’t anything else to do. We can’t leave you here alone to be killed, and I am sure you don’t want us to stay and be killed with you.”

“But how can I do it? You know I can’t swim a stroke.”

“That does n’t make any difference. All you have to do is to draw in a long breath, jump straight down, feet first if you prefer it, and keep perfectly still. Cæsar and I will do the rest and have you safe in the cavern in no time.”

During this conversation all three of them remained concealed behind some rocks on the water’s edge, whence they could command a view of the forest in the direction from which they had come. Suddenly Cæsar uttered a whispered exclamation, and looking at where he was pointing, the others saw several dusky figures gliding silently among the trees. The Indians were evidently searching for

them and would reach the place they now occupied in another minute.

At this sight every vestige of color left Aleck's face. He gave one wild look about him as though he never expected to see the sunlight again, drew a long breath, and before the others realized what he was about to do, he shut his eyes and sprang into the water, holding himself straight and rigid.

In an instant both Gale and the negro had dived after him, and only a widening circle of rings marked the spot where they had disappeared. So rapid were their movements that the water had hardly closed over Aleck's head before his arms were seized and he felt himself impelled forward. At this his mouth flew open and he began to struggle so furiously that he very nearly drowned his companions as well as himself before they finally succeeded in pulling him under the rocky arch, and bringing him to the surface inside the cavern. There he presented such a picture of comical woe, as he sat on the rock to which they had dragged him, gasping for breath and choking with the quantity of salt water that he had swallowed, that, in spite

of being provoked at him for his struggles, the others could not help laughing.

“Oh, you can laugh!” he said as soon as he found his voice, “but of all awful things in this world that is the worst. Indian tortures can’t compare to it. Now you ’ve got me here, but you ’ll never get me out alive, for nothing will induce me to go into that hideous water again. I’d rather die here than suffer another half hour of such agony.”

“Half hour!” exclaimed Gale, “What do you mean? You were n’t half a minute in the water!”

“I don’t care how long it was,” said Aleck. “It seemed an eternity, and I’d throw myself into the arms of the Indians rather than to go into that water again.”

The cavern into which Aleck had been brought so sorely against his will, extended back for an unknown distance into the darkness. Its roof was low and arched, while along its sides ran several shelves of coral rock. On one of these the boys were now perched. The blow-hole, from which such weird sounds were produced under certain conditions of wind and tide, was at the end of a narrow cleft, and through it a single direct ray of sunlight found its

way to the interior. All the other light in the cavern came through the water at its entrance, and was of such a peculiar greenish hue that it invested the place with an air of strange unreality.

When their eyes had grown somewhat accustomed to this unnatural light, the boys discovered on one of the rocky shelves a quantity of driftwood, bleached to the whiteness of bones by long exposure to wind and weather. As Cæsar had brought his flint and steel with him, Gale secured the punk that he had thrust through the blow-hole, and proposed that they make some torches and explore the rear of the cavern, with the faint hope of discovering some other outlet to the upper regions of air and sunlight. Much as Aleck dreaded to be left alone, he favored this plan, because it might open a way of escape for him other than the one he declared he would never again use. Nothing, however, could induce him to leave his present position, and so the others were forced to undertake their exploration without him.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALECK'S MARVELLOUS DISCOVERY.

THEY were gone longer than they had intended, and when they returned without having discovered any other opening, Gale expected to find Aleck greatly distressed at their prolonged absence. On the contrary, they found him sitting quietly very nearly where they had left him, but with his face close to the surface of the water. He was peering so intently into its green depths that he did not notice their approach until they were close beside him. Then, without looking up, he called: "Oh, Gale! come here quick! Look down there, and tell me what you see."

Gale did as requested, but his eyes were so blinded by the light of the torches he had just been using, that at first he saw nothing unusual. "What is it?" he asked. "I don't see anything but a great pile of coral and some fish."



GALE AND ALECK DISCOVER THE CORAL SHIP.

"Great pile of coral!" exclaimed Aleck, almost indignantly. "Can't you make out the form of a ship? Don't you see the bow and the stern, and the stumps of masts, and that black hole in the middle that looks exactly like a hatchway? One side seems to be all smashed in; but it's a ship, I'm sure it is, a regular coral ship!"

"I declare, I believe you are right!" cried Gale, greatly excited, as he too began to trace the outline indicated by Aleck. "But how on earth did you happen to notice it? I never should have, unless you had pointed it out."

"By watching that ray of sunlight from the blow-hole," answered Aleck. "I noticed that wherever it shone I could see clear to the bottom, and I got interested in watching the new things I could make out as it moved along. By and by it reached what I had taken to be the point of a big lump of coral, and then I saw how exactly it resembled the bow of a ship. Oh, Gale! what if it should really be a ship? and should be the very Spanish galleon that your great-grandfather sailed in!"

For a moment Gale returned no answer. He was lying flat on the rock, with his face close to the sur-

face of the water, intently studying the outlines of that strange mass of coral. Most of it was of a dingy greenish tinge, showing that its insect-builders were still alive and in occupation of its myriad cells. There were, however, patches of glistening white that denoted dead coral, infinitely more beautiful than when alive with its innumerable tenants. There could be no doubt that the outline as a whole was in perfect resemblance to that of a ship. Moreover, with its high stern and low bow, it was that of some very ancient vessel, such as he had only seen in pictures. There seemed no reason why, lying in those placid depths, absolutely motionless and undisturbed by the storms that raged above it, a ship should not have become gradually encrusted with coral, and thus indefinitely preserved against the ravages of time.

“Well!” said Aleck, eagerly, as Gale finally rose to his feet, “what do you think?”

“It certainly looks very much like a ship,” replied Gale, cautiously. “The only way to prove it, though, is for one of us to dive down there and break off a bit of that coral to see if there is wood beneath it.” With this he began to remove his clothing.

“No, Cap’n!” exclaimed the negro, who had been a silent but interested listener to the conversation between his companions. “Let Cæsar go. Him swim like a fish. Maybe you git hurt.”

The brave fellow could have given no more striking proof of fidelity and a determination to make any sacrifice in the service of one to whom he felt under an obligation, than by thus offering to investigate an object that superstitious tradition had taught him to dread above all others.

He did not wait for an answer, and before Gale could frame one he had gone, and they could see his black form cleaving the green waters beneath them. They saw him reach the edge of the opening that they believed to be the main hatchway of the old ship, and pause there for several seconds. He was trying to tear off a bit of the projecting coral. He succeeded, and as he again rose to the surface he handed his prize to Gale. The piece of coral was only a few inches long, but to its base were clinging some shreds of wood that had been torn off with it. This testimony was convincing. There was no longer any doubt as to the structure of the coral ship.

“Hurrah, old man!” shouted the young sailor, waving the tell-tale fragment above his head. “It’s a ship, sure enough, and I do believe it is the *Aztec*, the ‘old gold mine,’ as Sir Richard called it. Aleck, you’re a trump! Cæsar, you’re another! We’re all trumps! and, though we may not look it just at this moment, we’re all millionaires into the bargain! Now the question is, how shall we work our mine and develop its resources?”

“If I could only swim!” exclaimed Aleck, “I’d go down there in a minute.”

Cæsar reported that while he was at the edge of the hatchway he could see right through the side of the coral ship by means of the great hole that they had already noticed.

“Then perhaps some of her cargo has worked out through it!” suggested Gale. “I declare I believe I can see it now!”

“So can I!” cried Aleck, whose eyesight, guided by his desire, would have enabled him to see almost anything that was suggested just then.

There certainly was something to be seen that they had not noticed before, for the gleam of sunlight had passed over the side of the ship, and now

penetrated to the bottom of the green water at a point close beside the jagged opening. There it shone full on a confused mass of debris that looked as though it had poured from the ship, and was at any rate distinct from the adjacent bottom. It might be rocks or coral; but then it might be something else. At any rate Gale proposed to find out. He explained this to Cæsar as he threw off his clothing, and when he was ready they dived together.

When they again rose to the surface, Gale brought with him a great mass of something that required all his strength, aided by that of Aleck, to lift from the water.

"They are only oysters!" exclaimed Aleck, in a tone of deep disappointment.

"So they are," replied Gale, viewing his prize with disgust. "No matter, we can eat them, and that is one point gained."

"Speaking of eating," said Aleck, "it seems to me that I would rather have a good square meal just at this minute than a whole cave full of gold and silver."

"So would I," agreed Gale, aroused to the fact

that, as it was now long past noon and they had had nothing to eat that day, he was ravenously hungry. "Even if we had brought up a bag of doubloons, which we have n't, I 'd be willing to give them all for a bunch of those turtle yellows that Cæsar thinks are so fine, and which really were n't half bad after all."

A remark which shows how differently the same thing may be regarded under differing conditions.

While these two were thus exchanging ideas on the subject of hunger, Cæsar brought to the surface and landed with considerable difficulty a block of coral to which neither of them paid much attention. Then, joining in their conversation, he announced that he too was so nearly starved that he was inclined to go outside and see if the Indians had not departed; in which case he would bring back something in the way of food more substantial than oysters.

The others protested against his undertaking anything so dangerous.

"You must n't think of such a thing!" cried Gale.

"You 'd certainly be captured, and then what

would become of us, or rather me?" asked Aleck, plaintively.

"Injun mebbe gone; den me bring big bunch banan'; ripe, yellow, good for heat," urged the negro.

"We ought to have known enough to bring some with us when we came," reflected Gale.

"How good ripe bananas would taste just now!" added Aleck.

"Me bring a pineap' an' some yam. Mebbe fin' some fish. Suppose me see Injun aint nowhere, den come back, pull Marse Penrose out troo de watter, an' we all go home to suppah."

"Never," exclaimed Aleck, firmly, "will I leave the cavern that way!"

"Nonsense!" said Gale.

"It may be," replied the boy, "but I mean it all the same. I have said that I never again would go through that horrible water, and I never will if I can possibly help it. The only way you can make me do so is to drag me out by force, and if you do so I won't even shut my mouth to help you. So all you'd do would be to drown me, and then you'd be murderers."

“But you’ll die of starvation if you remain here,” interrupted Gale, impatiently.

“Oh no. You’ll bring me things to eat,” answered Aleck, with a firm faith that his companions would never desert him. “I don’t know but what it would be a good idea for Cæsar to go out now, and take a little look for something. It would be awful to have to go all night as well as all day without anything to eat, and seems to me it’s beginning to grow dark now.”

“All right,” assented Gale; “but I can’t let him go alone. If he goes, I must——”

“Oh, Gale, Gale!” cried Aleck, springing to his feet and flinging both arms about his companion as if to hold him fast. “Don’t think of such a thing for a moment. I should go crazy if you left me alone in this dreadful place.”

“All right, old man, I won’t leave you,” answered Gale, soothingly, “but we must have food, that’s certain. So I guess you’d better go, Cæsar, and make a try for something to eat. Only be awfully careful. Remember that we depend on you for everything now. You’d better hurry, too, for the tide seems to be rising again and the swim is grow-

ing longer every minute. So good-bye. Take care of yourself and get back as quick as you can."

"Yes, sah, I 'se boun' to come back in berry little time, s'posin' I is n't cotch by dem red Injuns. Ef dey does cotch me—ef dey does! Well, I 'se bid you good-day, Sir Rich. Allason, an' I haint nebber forgit what ma ole granfodder say."

With these words the faithful fellow plunged into the darkening waters, and disappeared from the sight of the anxious lads.

CHAPTER XV.

GOLDEN OYSTERS.

BEFORE departing on his perilous mission Cæsar drew on his own trousers, and, by mistake, Gale's shirt, which was almost a new one. Its owner was inclined to be vexed when he discovered his loss a few minutes after the negro's disappearance; but his vexation vanished when he found that Cæsar had left in the pocket of his own shirt his fire bag containing flint and steel. Now they could at least have a fire, and thereby render their position much more comfortable. The remnants of their torches, neglected in the excitement of diving to the coral ship, had long since burned out, and the rising waters now swept over the place where they had built a fire on first entering this submarine chamber.

As Gale and Aleck knew that it could not yet be sundown, they wondered at the gloom in which their surroundings were now shrouded. Had they been

outside they would have realized that this was owing to dense, black clouds that draped the heavens from horizon to zenith as with a pall. It was evident that a mighty storm was about to burst above the island ; and, finally, even those in the cavern received intimations of its coming through the moanings heard from the rock-bound blow-hole. As they realized the meaning of these boding sounds, they hoped that Cæsar would hasten back, even though he should come without food, so as to rejoin them before the rising sea rendered his return impossible.

Warned by the encroaching waters, the boys built their fire on the uppermost of the coral shelves, where lodged sticks of bleached driftwood furnished a ready fuel.

"These sticks show that at some time or other the water has been even as high as this ledge," said Gale, as he gathered an armful of the age-whitened fuel. "They are dry as bones, though, which shows that no water has been near them for years. Wet wood would hold its moisture indefinitely in this damp place, so I guess the ledge will keep us safe enough and dry enough until the tide falls again."

"I hope so," replied Aleck Penrose, with a shudder.

In their retreat to this place of fancied security, the boys did not neglect to carry the bunch of oysters with them, and they anticipated a feast from these as soon as the fire should be hot enough to open them. Not being accustomed to the use of flint and steel, however, they experienced the greatest difficulty in procuring a blaze, and it was not until after half an hour of persistent effort, that Gale succeeded in lodging a spark in the fragment of punk with which he had provided himself that morning. Whirling this rapidly about his head, in imitation of Cæsar, he was rewarded by a glowing coal which, gently inserted among the shavings and slivers prepared by Aleck, and vigorously blown upon, finally leaped into the desired flame. Judiciously feeding this with dry sticks, the boys soon had a fierce cheery blaze, that illumined the cavern for many yards about them.

Although this was calculated to add greatly to their comfort, it was also the cause of increasing their uneasiness, for it showed them how steadily the waters had risen since they had retreated to this last place of refuge. Already the point at which they had parted with Cæsar had disappeared beneath

the heaving flood, that now looked ominously black, and reflected the ruddy firelight from certain angles, as though bloodshot eyes were taking furtive glimpses of the situation. At the same time the moanings of the blow-hole were mightily increased in volume and frequency.

"I 'm afraid there's no use watching any longer for Cæsar," said Gale, as he noted these ominous indications. "It looks as though there was a big storm on deck, and, if there is, Cæsar is too wise a fellow to risk the chance of being dashed against the rocks while trying to get back to this place. He 'll have to wait now until the sea goes down, or until another daylight shows him how to avoid its dangers, and we might as well make up our minds to pass the night where we are."

"I think he might have called through the blow-hole and told us what he was doing," said Aleck.

"So he might, and perhaps he has, only we have n't heard him above the howling of the wind. He may be there at this very minute, and I'm going to make a try to communicate with him."

Thus saying, the impulsive young mate dropped off his perch into the water, and cautiously waded

to the bottom of the crevice that led to the outer world. He found the place with some difficulty, and with the full strength of his lungs shouted up through the aperture, "Cæsar ! Oh, Cæsar !"

An unearthly moan, caused by a rush of insucked air, was his only answer.

Again he bent his head for a shout. At that instant a huge wave broke his foothold and swept him helplessly away ; while, with a shriek that echoed through the cavern as though in mockery of his puny efforts, a volume of its water rushed up through the crevice and was spouted high in the outer air.

Aleck Penrose uttered a cry of consternation, as, by the dancing firelight, he perceived what had happened to his friend ; but he retained sufficient presence of mind to reach out and grasp one of Gale's hands as the latter was being swept past the ledge. Fortunately, the energy of the wave was nearly spent ; and, with Aleck's aid, Gale succeeded in regaining the rocky shelf on which the fire still blazed so cheerily.

"That telephone is evidently closed for the night," remarked the young mate lightly as he seated him-

self close beside the fire, and began to wring the water from his soaked garments.

“Oh, Gale! it is dreadful! perfectly dreadful! If you had been drowned, I should have jumped in and drowned too. I never could have stayed here alone.”

“Drowned!” repeated Gale, in a tone of surprise, “who said anything about being drowned? I never thought of such a thing. If it had n’t been for you though I might have been flung against those rocks, and had some bits of bark rubbed off. So I’m ever so much obliged to you for grabbing me as you did. Ugh! but it’s cold! What a lucky thing it is that we have got this fire. Now let’s put on the oysters and have supper. That bunch of oysters is another mighty lucky thing. If it had been merely a lump of gold or silver, as I hoped when I found it lying beside the coral ship, we would have gone to bed hungry this night.”

Thus, by a seemingly careless and light-hearted manner of regarding their situation, did Gale strive to banish his comrade’s fears. In reality his own heart was as heavy as lead, and he looked forward to spending a night in that place with the deepest

anxiety. It would never do to show this to Aleck, though. The boy was already white-lipped, and shaking as with an ague.

“What do you suppose has become of Cæsar?” asked the latter.

“Oh, he ’s all right, and I have no doubt is worrying more about us than we are about him ; but he ’ll find his way back here as soon as the tide falls.”

“Do you really think it will fall again before it rises high enough to drown us?”

“What an absurd idea! Of course it will. I won’t say but what if it was a spring flood it might not fill this place to the roof, especially with such a storm as seems to be raging outside to help it. This is the dark of the moon though, and a season of neap tides ; so I don’t believe it can rise much higher than it is now. That ’s another instance of our good luck. Hello ! There they go ! Have an oyster ? See, one fellow has opened. Take him quick before he is all frizzled up and spoiled.”

While he had been talking, Gale had raked a bed of coals from the fire, and placed his bunch of oysters in their midst, where they soon began to open with the heat.

The boys were so very hungry, that they willingly ran the risk of burning both fingers and tongues by snatching the delicious morsels from the hot shells as fast as they opened, and transferring them to their mouths with the same movement.

“My ! but are n’t they good !” exclaimed Gale. “That old coral ship was worth finding after all. I’m going down there for another bunch first thing in the morning.”

“Best things I ever tasted,” replied Aleck, oblivious for the moment of his dismal surroundings.

“I wonder what this bunch is formed around,” asked Gale, reflectively, after his hunger was somewhat appeased. “Oysters always fasten themselves to something or other, you know.”

To satisfy his curiosity the young mate gave the bunch several quick blows with the back of his sheath knife. Half a dozen of the empty shells broke off and fell into the fire, disclosing a small portion of the surface to which they had clung.

“It looks like metal !” cried Aleck, gazing keenly at the space thus laid bare.

“It is metal !” exclaimed Gale, excitedly, as he scratched the dully gleaming surface with the point

of his knife. "It is not only metal, but it is a soft yellow metal. Oh, Aleck! Can it be——?"

At that moment a smooth, oily-looking wave lifted itself with a mighty effort, and swept entirely over the ledge on which our young castaways were seated. With a great hissing, and amid clouds of steam, the fire was suddenly extinguished. In an instant the vast echoing cavern was filled with a darkness as profound as it was dreadful.

With cries of terror the lads sprang to their feet, and, groping for each other, clung together for mutual support. For a few moments even stout-hearted Gale Ellicot was panic-stricken and unnerved; while poor Aleck, who had always claimed that he was a coward, sobbed aloud with fright.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE.

ENGROSSED by their recent interests, our young castaways had almost forgotten their sad plight. They had ceased to listen for the steadily recurrent moanings from the blow-hole, and had even neglected to note the rising of the tide. Now the triumphant waters, dashing against the rocks, seemed to chuckle at having so neatly entrapped them, and the ghastly tidings were borne with hoarse boomings to the remotest recesses of the cavernous darkness. The unearthly shrieks from the blow-hole, seemingly a hundred-fold louder than before, echoed and re-echoed through the rock-walled galleries like demoniac laughter; and as they listened to the boding sounds the lads grew so faint with terror that their limbs almost refused to support them.

“Hello, old man! This will never do!” cried Gale, rousing himself with a brave effort, and forcing

himself to speak with a show of cheerfulness. "Keep a stiff upper lip, Aleck. We are not lost yet by a long shot. The tide can't rise much higher, and though we certainly are in a very uncomfortable position, I don't believe we are in any danger of losing our lives."

"Oh, Gale! don't you, really? Do you still think there is the slightest hope?"

"Hope! of course I do; bushels of it. The tide would have to rise five feet more to drown us, and I never heard of such a tide as that down here, except during a hurricane. This is n't hurricane season though. It is another bit of luck for us, you see, to be caught in such a scrape in a place where we can only get a wetting, instead of up in the Bay of Fundy, for instance, where the tides are twenty or thirty feet high. All we've got to do here is to stand still until the water falls again, or perhaps we can feel our way back to where the floor of the cavern is higher. Cæsar and I found such a place while we were exploring."

With this the young mate made a motion as though about to seek other quarters.

"No, Gale! don't move," begged Aleck. "A

single step might carry us off the ledge into deep water. Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! Why did n't I watch that water as it rose ? ”

“ Yes, why did n't we ? ” echoed Gale, careless of what he said, so long as he could divert his companion's thoughts. “ Why did n't we station a lookout and keep the lead going, instead of stuffing ourselves with oysters, and trying experiments with unknown metals ? By the way, did you notice how yellow that stuff looked ? Do you suppose it could have been gold ? ”

“ I don't know, and I don't care. All the gold in the world is n't worth thinking about now. I can't think of anything except dear little Jess, my sister, you know, who has n't any one in the world to love her but me. Oh, I must live for her sake ! I must ! I must ! And I will too,” Aleck added, clinching his teeth. “ I will never give in so long as my head is above this awful water.”

“ That 's right, my hearty ! That 's the way to talk ! I 've got to live too, for I have a sister, as well as a mother, and a brother, and a home all dependent upon me. So you see I 've just got to get out of this place and back to them.”

Thus, in talking of their dear ones, and cheering each other with helpful words, these brave young souls bade defiance to the horrors surrounding them.

For an hour longer the waters continued to gain on them, until they stood knee-deep in it, and occasional swells rose to their waists. They were chilled almost to numbness, and wearied beyond ordinary endurance; but they would not give in, they could not.

At length, after a prolonged silence, during which Aleck leaned so heavily on his companion that the latter feared he had fainted, Gale aroused him with a shout.

“We are going to pull through all right, old man! The tide has turned! The water is below my knees! Thank God! Thank God! We shall get out of this yet, and I shall again see the little old home. I know I shall.”

Had it been light enough, Aleck might have seen big, hot tears of thankfulness filling the brave blue eyes, from which no amount of terror or pain could have extracted aught save unflinching defiance.

So the long, terrible night wore itself slowly

away. The waters subsided until the ledge was no longer submerged, and the lads gratefully stretched their pain-racked bodies on its hard, wet surface. The horrid night-voices of the cavern gradually sank into moans and murmurs, that were finally merged in an absolute stillness, and then, at last, there came a suspicion of gray light, almost undefinable, but yet a true herald of day. Very shortly now would the occupants of that awful dungeon be awakened from their hideous nightmare, and restored to life with all that it held of joyful promise.

CHAPTER XVII.

SIXTY PEBBLES MARK ONE HOUR.

FOR some time after the thin ray of light, filtering through the narrow crevice of the blow-hole, announced the welcome dawn of day, the waters, that still rolled up the deep channel of the cavern with serpentine undulations of their smooth surface, remained black and unfathomable. Then they gradually assumed a greenish hue, that was faintly reflected throughout the vast rock-walled chamber.

“That means sunrise!” cried Gale, joyfully; “and now we must set about getting out of this place as quickly as possible. I’d rather trust to the mercy of Indians or pirates, than pass another such night as we have just gone through with. I don’t mind telling you now, old man, that at one time I lost all hope of ever seeing daylight again. If the water had raised a few inches higher, I know I should

have given out. I can't understand, though, what caused such a rise, anyway. The storm must have driven in a regular tidal-wave, for the water rose higher than the highest mark of the highest spring tides, as was shown by that lodged driftwood. Anyhow, it was higher than I ever want to see it again, so now let 's make a bold move for sunlight and freedom, and get out of here before the waters return."

"You can go, Gale, and you must, of course; but I don't see any chance of me ever leaving this place alive," said Aleck, with a pathetic quaver in his voice. The poor lad was faint and exhausted from the terrible strain of the long night, and completely unmanned by the apparently insurmountable difficulties that the situation still presented.

"You know I can't go without you, old fellow," replied Gale, in a determined tone. "If you could only swim, how simple it would all be," he added reflectively.

"But I can't, and if I could, nothing would induce me to enter that dreadful water again," answered Aleck, despairingly, and with a shuddering glance at the cruel depths.

“Or if Cæsar would only come,” continued Gale, “and I can’t imagine why he does n’t. I am afraid something serious has happened to him. Yes, something must have happened, or he would have been here long ago.”

“You must go and find out,” said Aleck, faintly.

“Yes, I suppose I must,” answered Gale, gazing meditatively at his companion; “but I hate the very thought of leaving you here alone, even for a few minutes.”

“You can’t hate it or dread it as much as I do; but I can bear it if you will only promise to come back. You ’ll do that, won’t you, Gale? And you won’t be gone more than an hour at the very longest? If you are, I shall go crazy. I shall sit here and count, and if you have n’t come back by the time I have counted sixty times sixty, I shall know that you are not coming at all, and that I ’ve nothing more to hope for.”

The lad’s tone was so pathetic that it made Gale’s heart ache, but he answered cheerily:

“Of course I ’ll come back, old man, and in a very few minutes, too. I only mean to take a little look around and try to pick up something for us to

eat. I'll sing out down the blow-hole to let you know I've got ashore all right. Then, before you have counted a score of your sixties, I'll be back again with breakfast and the latest news. Perhaps I'll bring Cæsar, too. Now good-bye, and don't worry one little bit, for we'll get out of this scrape all right yet, see if we don't."

There was a lingering hand-clasp between the two lads, and then Gale plunged into the green-tinted waters. For a moment Aleck could see his swiftly moving body, and then it disappeared in the dark shadow of the rocky portal. Thus left alone, the poor boy's remnant of strength deserted him; and, flinging himself face downward on the wet rocks, he cried out in his despair: "I shall die in this place! I know I shall! I know I shall!"

Suddenly he heard a voice as clearly as though the speaker stood in the cavern and within a few yards of him. "Hello, old man! Are you there? I'm all right! there's been an old howler of a hurricane up here, and I don't see any trace of a living soul."

The welcome sound caused the lad who was still imprisoned to spring to his feet, and he eagerly

shouted a reply : " Yes, I 'm here, Gale, and so glad you are safe. Now please hurry."

" All right. I 'm off now to look for breakfast. Good-bye."

After that how slowly the minutes, as represented by counts of sixty each, dragged away to the lonely lad in the cavern. What an eternity each one seemed ! If it were not for the record of his count, which he kept by rows of pebbles, ten in each row, Aleck would have deemed that hours instead of minutes had passed, long before the sixth row of pebbles was reached. The dim depths of the cavern seemed to swarm with vague but terrible forms, ready to spring at him. He dared not look around, but kept his gaze fixed on the single ray of bright light that formed the sole connecting link between him and the outer world. It fell on his rows of pebbles, and moved as these increased in number. As they did so, Aleck's count became slower, and his heart grew heavier. What should he do if the end of the sixth row were reached, and Gale had not returned ? The latter had said he would be back within twenty minutes ; but the second row of pebbles had long since been passed.

At length the fifth row was complete, and the sixth was well under way. Gale had been killed or borne into captivity, and he should never see him again. Aleck was convinced of this now ; but he continued his count mechanically, and laid his pebbles without a thought of what he was doing.

All at once there came a shout, apparently from close beside him, and a yellow object dropping from above, landed among the pebbles, scattering confusion through the orderly rows.

“ Hello, down there ! Here I am again, safe and sound, and there ’s a banana for your breakfast. Look out for another, and for this one, and this. I ’d send a pineapple if the hole was only a little larger ; but it will keep until you get out here. Now watch out for me. I ’m going around by the front door.”

These words were like music from Heaven to the despairing lad, and in a moment his counting of minutes, his fears, and his sufferings were forgotten. With his whole soul concentrated in the gaze, he fixed his eyes on the green waters, and watched for the coming of his friend.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALECK'S FRIENDSHIP IS TESTED.

AS Aleck Penrose gazed eagerly into the green depths, a dim form, like that of some huge fish, emerged from the shadowy portal, and, in another moment, Gale shot to the surface and scrambled out on the rocky ledge.

"There!" gasped the swimmer, flinging his wet hair from his eyes, and shaking himself like a water-dog. "Did n't I tell you I'd be back inside of twenty minutes? I wish I'd said half an hour, though, for I had n't time to visit lots of places I wanted to."

"Oh, Gale!" interrupted Aleck, reproachfully, "you've been gone a full hour, for I have counted."

"Hour! Nonsense! It can't be. Why, I hurried like everything. You must have counted too fast, or kept a wrong tally, for I am certain I was n't gone half that time."

"Well, it seemed like ten hours," sighed Aleck, as he picked up a banana and began to eat it hungrily.

"There has been a tremendous storm," continued Gale, also eating a banana as he spoke, "and I begin to think we were mighty lucky not to be out in it. Trees were blown down in every direction, and the lower end of the island, as far as the pond, has evidently been under water. Our canoe has disappeared, and so have those of the Indians. I expect their owners went in them, though, and either killed poor Cæsar or carried him off as a prisoner, for I can't find a trace of him. So the way is clear for us to get out of here as soon as we please, and after that is accomplished we will decide what to do."

"How good these bananas are," remarked Aleck, irrelevantly, anxious to postpone the discussion of an unpleasant topic as long as possible.

"Are n't they? and filling, too? I did n't half believe it when Mr. Almy told us that the banana was the most perfect fruit in the world, because it alone contained all the elements necessary to the support of human life. I do now, though, for I feel as strong as though I had just eaten a hearty break-

fast of beefsteak, and eggs, and hot biscuit, and buckwheat cakes with maple syrup, and——”

“Do you feel as though you had had a cup of coffee, too?” asked Aleck.

“Well, no, not exactly; and, come to think of it, where is our water-breaker?”

“I ’m sure I don’t know, and I ’m awfully thirsty, too.”

“All the more reason for our getting out of here, and I have thought of a way to do it.”

“You have?” cried Aleck, his face lighting with anticipation. “What is it?”

“I ’ll tell you as soon as I make arrangements,” replied Gale. “I ’ve got to go out again, but I ’ll be right back. Honest, I won’t be gone ten minutes this time.”

“Oh, Gale! Must you?”

“Yes, I must, so here goes. Good-bye.”

With these words the active young fellow, who seemed to poor Aleck to be almost as much at home in the water as a fish, dived out of sight, and, in another minute, his cheery assurance of safety was transmitted through the narrow aperture above Aleck’s head.

He did not remain away longer than the specified time, and when he again entered the cavern he pulled after him two lengths of a rope-like vine, very slender, but extremely tough.

“Whew !” he exclaimed, as he regained his breath. “That was a drag, you ’d better believe, and I came mighty near letting go before I got them in here. Now look here, old fellow. I know how you dread the water, but you simply must go into it once more, for there is n’t any other way out of this place. If Cæsar was here we would just pick you up and carry you out by main strength, the same way we brought you in here : but as he is n’t, I ’ve got to make these ropes help us in his place. You see, I am securing the larger one to this rock, and the other end of it is made fast outside. It is a guide line, by which you must pull yourself along. The other rope I am going to knot, so, under your arms. Now I shall go outside and haul on it. The moment I begin to pull, you must catch hold of the guide line and jump overboard. After that we will have you out of here in no time. Don’t say a word. It ’s the only way, and you must take it. Just draw in a long breath and pull on the guide line all you know how. In

two minutes from now you 'll be standing outside in the blessed sunlight; and I tell you it 's fine out there, after twenty-four hours of this place. Ugh!"

Here Gale looked about him with a shudder, and then, without another word, he sprang into the water and disappeared.

Aleck, with bloodless face, stood where he had been left, like one paralyzed; but when a tug came on the line that was fastened about his body, he flung his arms around a projecting point of rock and refused to move.

"What is the matter down there?" called Gale through the blow-hole, after a minute of ineffectual tugging on one side and stubborn resistance on the other.

"It 's no use, Gale! I can't do it," shouted Aleck in reply, "but I 've thought of another plan. This rock can be cut with an axe. I know, for I have tried it. Now, if you will drop a line through the blow-hole, I 'll send up our axe by it. Then, if you will only chop the hole a little larger, I can get out through it. I know I can. You 've no idea how thin I can make myself when I try."

"All right!" shouted Gale, cheerily, "I 'm per-

fectly willing to try your plan. So send up the axe. Here's your line."

Almost breathlessly the captive lad listened to the ringing blows from above that promised him a deliverance from his prison, without undergoing the frightful ordeal of water.

All at once they ceased, and his friend's voice came to him clearly, but in tones of agonized distress.

"Oh, Aleck! help, quick! Help! or I'm— Oh-h-h!"

The cry died away in a moan, and then all was still.

"What is it, Gale? What is the matter? Oh, Gale, speak to me! Gale! Gale!"

Aleck's despairing shout was pitiful in its intensity, but it remained unanswered.

For a moment he stood irresolute, gazing into the green depths beneath him. A wave of blood crimsoned his face, and then receded, leaving a deathly pallor in its place. He inhaled a long breath, clenched his teeth, and with a firm clutch of the guide line sprang into the dreaded water.

Love for his friend had overcome Aleck's fear, and proved stronger than his love for himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

A BRAVE COWARD.

WHEN Aleck Penrose, who called himself a coward, and was believed to be such by most of his acquaintances, took that leap into the water, braving what he believed to be an almost certain death for the sake of his friend, he performed as fine an act of heroism as has ever been recorded. The danger to himself, his own fears, and his unconquerable dread of the dim depths into which he must plunge, were accounted as nothing beside his desire to reach the friend whom he believed to be in some deadly peril.

Most of us have a cowardly fear of one thing or another. We are afraid of the dark, or of physical pain, or of the ridicule which sometimes greets our efforts to do right, or of some of the thousand bugaboos that rise up to terrify us and render our lives miserable. To dread these things, or even to

fear them, is no proof of cowardice, though it is cowardly to flee from or yield to them. Many a soldier, who has afterwards proved himself to be among the bravest of the brave, has been made ill with fright on being ordered into his first battle, or has turned pale and trembled so as to be hardly able to stand at the first scream of a shell. If he should yield to this terror and run away he would indeed be a coward; but if he overcomes it, and performs his duty in spite of it, he is doubly a hero, and proves himself braver than those of his comrades who have had no such fears to contend with.

There was once a splendid fellow who feared nothing in life, but had an overwhelming dread of death. He would not speak of it nor consider it in any way if he could help it, and he often said that he knew he should prove to be a miserable coward when he met it, no matter how easily it came to him. When it finally appeared before him, suddenly, and in a most agonizing form, and the doctors told him that he had but an hour longer to live, he lay for a minute like one stunned. In that brief space he strove with the terror of a lifetime, and conquered it. During the succeeding hour he gave no sign of

physical suffering nor mental agony, but calmly settled his business affairs, dictated several letters, soothed his distracted wife, bade his loved ones farewell as cheerfully as though he were only going on a short journey, and died with a bright smile on his face as quietly as one who is falling into a peaceful slumber. Could he be called a coward? I think not, and yet he had always feared the meeting with this one enemy.

Such things go to prove that it is never fair to accuse any person of cowardice until he has either run away from his cause for terror, or, what is worse, yielded to it without a struggle.

Aleck Penrose called himself a coward and believed himself to be one, but was mistaken. Gale Ellicot knew better. The boy had proved his bravery when they left the *Egret* together, and Gale knew that, in spite of surface indications, his comrade's heart was as true as steel. Therefore, when the young mate found that his axe made almost no impression on the flint-like crust of rock inclosing the blow-hole, and that it was impossible, without proper tools, to enlarge the aperture so as to make an exit from the cavern, he employed a ruse, the

success of which depended entirely upon Aleck's bravery. He uttered an appeal for help that the imprisoned lad could not fail to hear, remained silent to the answering cry, and with a hand on the rope that led into the cavern confidently awaited results.

Under most circumstances this would have been a mean and cowardly thing to do, but, as matters stood, Gale felt himself justified in resorting to it. In fact, the puzzled fellow could think of no other plan for the release of his comrade. He could not leave Aleck in the cavern, nor could he drag him out against his will. So he made a false appeal to the lad's generous bravery, and it was nobly answered. Gale had been obliged to act quickly, for fear lest Aleck should undo the line fastened about his body, and thereby frustrate the only plan for escape that promised the slightest chance of success.

The moment Gale knew, by feeling a sudden strain on the guide line, that the imprisoned lad had leaped into the water, he began to pull with a furious energy on the second line, and to his joy was made aware by its heavy drag that it was still attached to his comrade's body.

Oh, how slowly it came in ! Then, for a moment, it refused to yield an inch. Gale was on the point of relaxing his strain and of leaping overboard, when it gave, and he could again haul it in. A few seconds later, and the young mate had dragged his precious burden from the waters, and laid it gently on the rocks high above their reach. Aleck's eyes were closed ; he was unconscious, and his face was bleeding from cruel contact with the sharp coral points studding the submarine portal through which he had been drawn. He was to all appearances dead, and might soon have been so in truth if Gale Ellicot had not known exactly what to do.

In his sailor experience Gale had witnessed the restoration of more than one person who was apparently drowned, and now he had no idea of letting this precious life slip from him. He did not begin with rubbing and slapping ; those were for circulation, and would come afterwards. Breathing was the first thing, and to promote this, Gale turned his patient on his face with one arm bent under his forehead. By this means the tongue was made to fall forward and a chance was given for the throat, mouth, and nostrils to clear themselves of water. At

the same time Gale maintained a steady pressure for a few seconds on the small of his patient's back, that helped to expel whatever water he might have swallowed.

There was a little heap of clothing lying near, both Gale's and Aleck's, that the former had drawn up through the blow-hole when he left the cavern the second time, and which was now nearly dried by the sun. Taking a coat from this, and folding it into a small bundle, Gale placed it beneath his patient's chest, and then he began to roll the body gently on its side and briskly back again, pressing with his hands just beneath the shoulder-blades each time that it resumed its first position. This rolling motion and pressing on the back was repeated every four or five seconds for about one minute, at the end of which time the young operator had the intense satisfaction of hearing his patient gasp, and knew that a natural breathing had been restored.

Now for circulation. Stripping off the wet shirt and drawers, which were the only garments worn by the rescued lad, Gale began to rub his limbs vigorously, *upward*, every now and then stopping to slap the soles of the feet smartly. He had neither towels

nor hot-water bags; but there was an abundance of hot sun, and he soon had the pleasure of seeing a flush of color tinge the boy's pallid cheeks. Now Gale wrapped his patient in all the dry clothing there was to be had, and, cutting a big palmetto leaf, thrust it into a crevice so that it shaded Aleck's face. As he did this the latter opened his eyes, gazed vaguely at his friend for an instant, closed them again, and fell into a quiet sleep.

Gale was jubilant. Not only was his beloved comrade escaped from that awful cavern, but the dreaded results of that escape had been averted. But his anxieties were not yet ended. Now that Aleck was peacefully sleeping, his awakening must be prepared for; and, with the limited resources at hand, this was no easy task.

CHAPTER XX.

FEATHERED HUNTERS FETCH A DINNER.

O H, if Cæsar were only here," said Gale to himself, repeating the wish that he had already formed a dozen times that day. He hated to leave Aleck in his present helpless condition, but there was no help for it. Food and water must be provided against the boy's awakening. Then, too, he had no fire nor means of making one; for Cæsar's fire-bag had been lost the night before, and nothing would have tempted even stout-hearted Gale Ellicot to dive into that submarine cavern just then to search for it. So, with a parting glance at his sleeping comrade, he started in the direction of their camp, and of the field on which he depended for supplies of food.

Upon reaching the camp-site he found, to his dismay, that the hut built by Cæsar and in which they had dwelt so comfortably during the past ten days, was

completely destroyed, though whether by the storm or by Indians he could not tell. Of the provisions they had collected, not a trace remained. The only articles of value that he picked up were a couple of gourds for holding water, the bowl-like upper shell of the turtle that had first directed them to the cavern, and several great bolts, that had been brought from the pile of old metal near the landing. - While searching for these things, Gale's eye caught sight of the faintest possible film of smoke rising from near the shore of the little lake. Hastening to the spot he was rejoiced to find, among the ashes of what had evidently been the Indian's camp-fire, a smoldering ember that in a few minutes more would have expired. Very carefully he breathed the breath of life into it, and coaxed it with splinters, until at length a welcome flame leaped merrily forth. Then he gathered sticks and logs, until he had a fire that would burn for hours. Now for some sweet-potatoes and bananas from the field, and then he would go back and look after Aleck.

"If I only had something in the shape of meat to make a stew of, or even a fish," he thought, as he walked toward the field. "Potatoes, and bananas, and

such things, are good enough in their way ; but when a fellow has been through what Aleck has, he needs something warm and strengthening to brace him up." Gale saw several flocks of pretty little bronze doves, and a number of quail, at which he threw bits of rock, in a vain attempt to secure one for a stew. Although they seemed quite fearless, they were not tame enough to be knocked over in any such fashion, and he soon gave over his fruitless efforts.

While the young mate was grubbing for sweet potatoes with his hands, for want of a better implement, he was startled by a series of harsh screams in the air overhead. Glancing up he saw two great birds circling high above him. One was evidently in pursuit of the other. At first they were too distant for him to distinguish their nature ; but, as they gradually approached the earth, he discovered that one was a hawk, holding some object in its talons, and that the other was that freebooter of the skies, a bald-headed eagle.

At length, with a savage scream and a fierce swoop, the eagle darted at the hawk so furiously, that, to escape the onslaught, the latter was compelled to drop his burden and seek safety in a

swifter flight. At this the winged robber, paying no further heed to the slave whom he thus compelled to labor for him, shot swiftly downward, with closed wings, after the falling object. He would certainly have caught it ere it touched the ground had not Gale, in his excitement, suddenly sprung to his feet with waving arms and a loud cry. As the startled eagle swerved to one side, the object of its pursuit lodged in a low bush not ten feet from where the lad stood. Hastening to the spot to discover the cause of all this fuss and noise, Gale was overjoyed to find a full-grown rabbit as fat as butter, and so recently killed as to be still warm.

“Thank you very much, Mr. Eagle,” he said mockingly, as he secured this prize. “Nothing could have suited me better just now, and I ’ll take as many more as you choose to bring along at the same price.” This was a very superfluous bit of courtesy, however, as the eagle was already far beyond hearing, and almost out of sight.

“Now I have something worth cooking,” reflected the food-finder, as, gathering up an armful of potatoes, bananas, and rabbit, he started back toward his camp-fire. Suddenly the thought occurred to him :

“Suppose Aleck should waken and find himself alone? what would he think had happened? and what would he do? He might go crazy, or leap into the sea in his despair, or do something else equally terrible to contemplate.” Gale became so terror-stricken at the dreadful pictures thus painted by his imagination, that, dropping his burdens, he started on a run toward the place where he supposed his friend to be, and which was about a quarter of a mile from the field.

A few minutes later Gale reached the spot where he had left the sole companion of his captivity. He could not be mistaken in it, for there was the now familiar opening in the rock to which they had given the name of “blow-hole.” There, too, lay the rope-like vine by means of which he had drawn Aleck from the cavern, but beyond this there was no trace of the lad’s presence. He had disappeared, so far as Gale could see, as completely as though he had never been on the island. As he realized this, the poor fellow stood like one bereft of motion through fright and bewilderment, not knowing which way to turn or to look.

CHAPTER XXI.

GALE LOSES ALECK AND ALECK LOSES GALE.

WHEN, under Gale's energetic ministrations, Aleck Penrose recovered from the brief unconsciousness caused by his rough contact with the submarine rocks, he at once recognized the friend who was so anxiously bending over him. At the same time he realized that a trick had been used to entice him from the cavern, and he became instantly filled with such an unreasoning resentment that he determined, if possible, to pay Gale back in his own coin. He therefore closed his eyes again, without having given a sign of recognition, and pretended to fall asleep. At the same time his anger so stimulated his faculties that his recovery was much more rapid than it otherwise could have been. He fur- tively watched Gale's movements, and was almost moved by his gentle care and half-uttered expressions of regret and anxiety, to forgive him then and

there. His resentment proved too strong, however, and he finally allowed his comrade to depart without a suspicion that his condition was other than what it seemed.

As soon as Gale disappeared, Aleck sat up, and, though still feeling very weak and shaky, he managed to dress himself. Then he followed slowly in the direction taken by his comrade. First he made his way to a place on the edge of the lake that was hidden from the camp, to which Gale had gone, and there quenched the distressing thirst from which he was suffering. He also bathed his bruised face. Then, feeling immensely refreshed and strengthened, he stole to the vicinity of the camp, where Gale was just then busy with his fire. When the latter visited the field, Aleck followed him, witnessed the episode of the eagle and hawk, and finally knew by the young mate's action in dropping his store of provisions and starting in the direction of the cavern that he had gone to look for him.

Now was the moment of Aleck's triumph. "He deserves a good scare," he said to himself. "The idea of playing such a mean trick on me! If he will only feel half as bad now as I did then, I shall be

satisfied." Then going to Gale's store of provisions the boy ate several bananas, and carried the rest of the things to camp. Here he buried the sweet potatoes beneath a bed of coals to bake, hung the rabbit over a low limb, filled the gourds and turtle-shell with water, and thrust several copperbolts into the fire. Then he began to wonder why Gale did not return; and, directly, his wonder changed to uneasiness. What if his friend should have come to some grief in searching for him? He might have fallen on the slippery rocks and broken a bone or sprained an ankle. A snake might have bitten him, or any one of a score of things might have happened. Oh! why had he done so stupid a thing as to deceive one to whom he owed so much? Why had he allowed him to go off on so fruitless a quest? Still, Gale had played him a mean trick and deserved to suffer a little in return. With this thought Aleck's resentment was again fanned into a feeble flame.

The punishment must not be carried too far, though, and he was willing to meet the culprit half way. Thus thinking, Aleck started toward the place where Gale had left him. He reached it without having met his comrade, nor could he now find a

trace of him. By this time the boy was thoroughly anxious, and he began to shout with a hope that the other might be somewhere within hearing. As he shouted he continued to walk through the forest, toward the upper end of the island, thinking that Gale must have gone in that direction.

This was precisely what the young mate had done, and at that moment, having completed the circuit of its upper half and come again to the field, he was making his way across it, filled with anxious misery. Suddenly he halted and gazed about him with an expression of perplexity mingled with fear. Here was the very place where he had left his store of provisions, but now they were gone. It certainly was the place, though. Yes, there was where he had dug the potatoes, and there was the tree from which he had cut the bananas. "Hello! what is this? A banana skin freshly torn off, as I'm a sinner! And there is another! Some one has been here since I left, and it must have been Aleck, for I am almost certain there is n't another human being on the island. The young villain! Could he have been shamming all that time? I don't believe it. He would n't serve me so mean a trick. If he was,

though ! Well, I don't know what I would do, but I would have good cause to feel provoked, that is certain."

While thus thinking, Gale left the field and hastened toward camp, where he fully expected to find his missing friend. To his intense disappointment the camp was as deserted as when he left it, nor could he see anything of him whom he so fully expected to find there. He found a trace of his recent presence, though, for here was his rabbit, and it certainly could not have come there of its own accord. The water vessels were full, too, and the bolts had been thrust into the fire.

"So, ho, Mr. Aleck ! you have been here, have you ? after leading me a nice wild-goose chase over the island, too, and making me feel as though I were a murderer. And now I suppose you are hiding somewhere in the bushes, where you can see me and enjoy my misery. Well, it's a mean trick, after all I have done for you ; but you 'd better believe there won't be any visible misery for you to enjoy, and you may remain in hiding until you are ready to come out, for all I care. It is certain that I sha'n't waste any more time in hunting for you.

“That is apt to be the way with friendships. If you expect too much from them you get left; and the more you do for your friend the more you can do. I should n’t be one bit surprised if Cæsar had run across a good chance to leave the island, and had taken advantage of it. It would be the proper payment, according to the rule of the world, for my friendliness toward him. He could easily have taken one of those Indian canoes and sneaked off. I know I could if I had been in his place. Well, I have had my lesson, and hereafter I am going to look out for myself first, last, and always. To begin with, I am going to cook this rabbit, and if Master Aleck does n’t choose to come in and explain his unfriendly actions by the time it is ready he won’t get any of it, that ’s all.”

CHAPTER XXII.

A PROOF OF CÆSAR'S DEATH.

FILLED with bitterness toward those who he considered had behaved so shabbily toward him, Gale Ellicot began to skin and prepare for dinner the unfortunate rabbit, which, while searching for its own dinner on the distant mainland, had been chased by some one of its many four-footed enemies, snapped up by the hawk, stolen by the eagle, captured by Gale, and brought to camp by Aleck Penrose. Now it seemed as though it were to be served and eaten with the bitter sauce of resentment.

Gale decided to stew it; and, for this purpose, he scooped a shallow hole in the sand as close as possible to the fire, and filled it with glowing coals. After a while he pushed these out, and carefully set his only stewpan, the turtle-shell, in their place. Two red-hot bolts, lifted from the fire by means of a

forked stick, and gently deposited in the water with which the shell was half filled, caused it to boil almost instantly. The rabbit, cut into small pieces, was then dropped in, a big palmetto leaf served as a cover, a lot of dampened grass was piled above this, and the stew was left to take care of itself.

“It won’t be good without salt,” reflected Gale, “so I guess I’ll go and hunt for some. My absence will give Aleck a chance to come out of his hiding-place, too, and when I get back we’ll hear what he has to say for himself.”

Thus thinking, Gale walked toward the place where they had first landed on the island, and where he hoped the recent storm would have left a thin deposit of salt on the rocks. All of a sudden, as he approached the shore, he was startled by a cry of, “Gale! Gale! Oh, he is dead! He is dead!”

The cry was accompanied by a tremendous splashing in the water, and as the one whose name was thus thrillingly uttered sprang into the open, he was confronted by a spectacle at once strange and terrible. On a jutting point of rock stood Aleck Penrose with blanched and horrified face, gazing into the water a few yards from him. It was in the

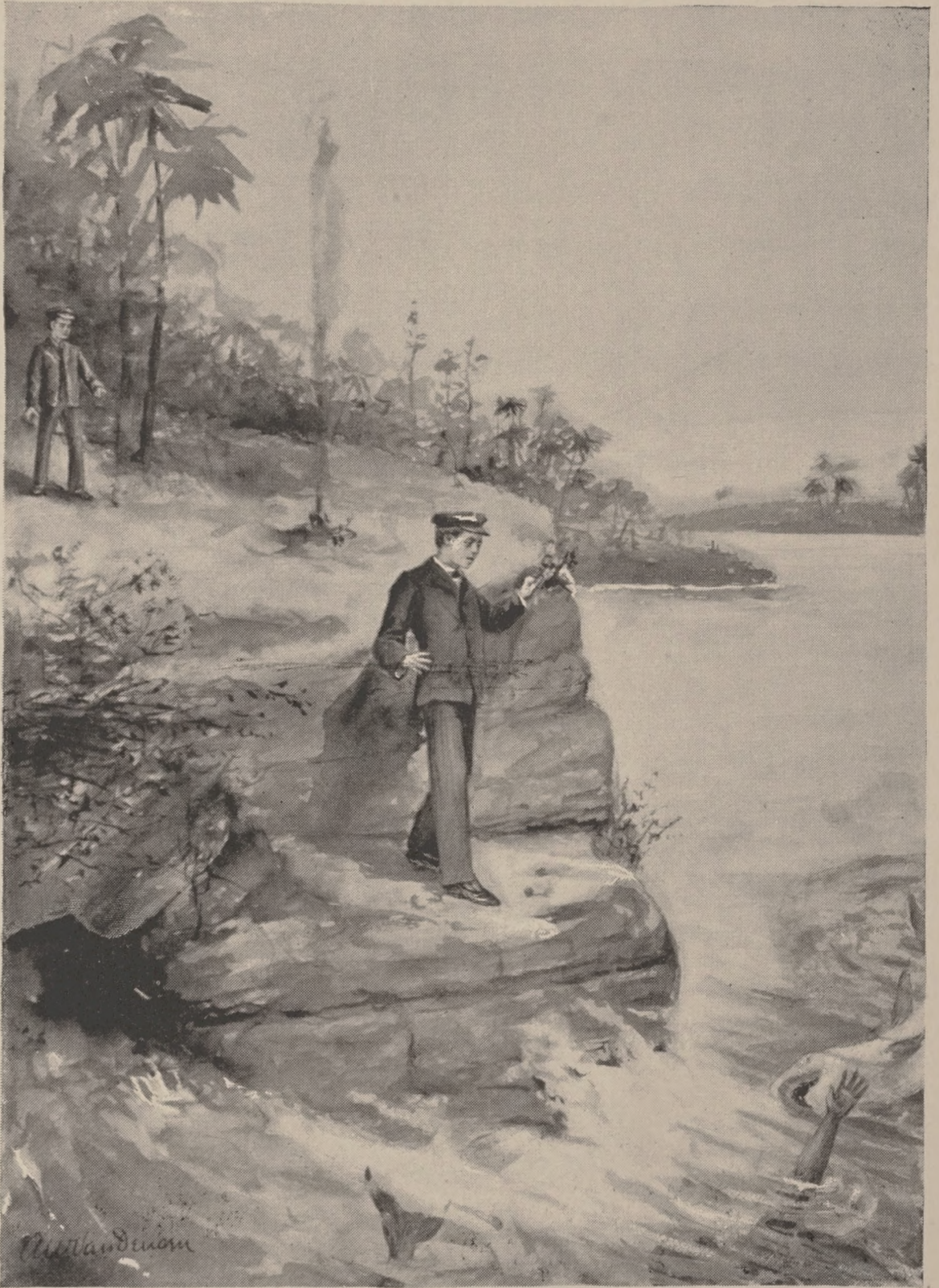
wildest commotion, and lashed into a foam that was crimsoned with blood. A dozen great sharks were snapping and tearing like a pack of wolves at a human body. As Gale gazed in consternation at the awful sight, a gaunt black arm was uplifted for an instant above the surface. The next moment it was dragged down, and the conclusion of the horrid feast was hidden deep beneath the sparkling eddies of an inflowing tide.

Now Gale's whole attention was concentrated on Aleck, who still stood on the point of rocks, uttering inarticulate moanings, but with his face covered by his hands.

"Don't take on so, old fellow. It's all over now," said Gale, gently, as he stepped unnoticed close to the grief-stricken boy.

At the sound of Gale's voice Aleck uttered a cry of terror, and started so, that he would have fallen into the sea, had not his comrade seized him by the arm.

"Why, what is the matter, man?" cried Gale, genuinely alarmed by the other's manner. "You are staring at me as though you thought I was a ghost."



“GALE! GALE! OH, HE IS DEAD! HE IS DEAD!”

“Oh, Gale! Is it you, really alive and well, when I thought I had just seen you dragged to a certain death? It can't be! It is too good to be true.

“Why can't it be? What made you think it was I that the sharks had got?”

“It certainly was your shirt, and when I first saw you you were lying down at the edge of the water, and seemed to be moving toward it. Just as I called out you suddenly plunged in, and were instantly surrounded by sharks. Oh! it was too awful! too terrible!” and the boy shuddered as he recalled the scene.

“My shirt, do you say?” exclaimed Gale, ignoring the rest of Aleck's bewildering statement regarding himself. “My shirt! and the arm that I saw was a black one. Oh, Aleck! it must have been Cæsar. Don't you remember that he put on my shirt, by mistake, in the cavern, and carried it away when he left us? What was he doing? Was he alive when you first saw him?”

“I don't know,” replied Aleck, still gazing at his companion in a bewildered fashion, as though finding it difficult to realize that it was indeed he. “I

could not see his head nor his feet. They seemed to be hanging over the edge of the rock, but he was moving in a jerky sort of way, and then all of a sudden he plunged into the water. Do you really think it was Cæsar?"

"I don't see who else it could have been. The body was not that of a white man, for I saw a black arm very plainly, and you say that you are certain he wore my shirt?"

"Yes, I am sure of that."

"I don't believe he was alive, though," continued Gale. "He must have been drowned and his body washed up on this rock during the storm. Here it must have remained until the tide again rose high enough to enable the sharks to get hold of it, and then they dragged it in. Poor fellow! Poor fellow! He has indeed given his life for me, or rather for us, as he said he would if the chance offered; and yet, only a few minutes ago, I was accusing him of having deserted us. That shows what a cruel thing it is to form a judgment without knowing all the facts in the case. Poor Cæsar! Poor, brave fellow! I have not the slightest doubt that he was as faithful to us in death as he proved himself in life. But

where have you been all this time, old man? and how did you manage to get here? The last I saw of you you were lying fast asleep near the blow-hole."

"I have been hunting for you," replied the boy, with a slightly conscious expression. "When I found myself alone, I went to the camp, and to the field, and back to camp, and back to where I came from, and then started to walk around the island, thinking you must be somewhere on the shore. I shouted till I was so hoarse I could n't make myself heard ten feet. When I got here I was just going to turn up the creek toward camp, when I saw you, as I supposed, lying on the rocks. But where have you been?"

"I," replied Gale, "have been searching for you, and can't understand at all how we managed to miss each other so completely. Did n't you bring the rabbit and other things in from the field?"

"Yes, and put the sweet potatoes into the ashes to bake," answered Aleck, who would not, for the world, that Gale should even guess at the feeling of resentment that animated him during the performance of that service.

“And I,” said Gale, equally ashamed of his own recent bitter thoughts, “have just put that same rabbit on to stew, expecting that you would turn up before it was ready, as you have. So now let us go and eat the dinner for which we have waited so long, and worked so hard. Poor old Cæsar,” he added, with a parting glance at the shining waters, “if there was anything in this world we could do for you, we would do it with all our might ; but as there is n’t, we must do the best we can for ourselves.”

So the comrades, with their friendship cemented more firmly than ever by their recent anxieties and common sorrow, returned to their dismantled camp. Here, after the hearty meal of which they stood so greatly in need, they lay down for the long undisturbed sleep that was equally necessary before they could even consider any plans for the future.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CAPTURED BY INDIANS.

WHEN Cæsar left the cavern for an outside scout, his prime object was to obtain food, and he had no idea of going farther than the field for that purpose. As he emerged from the water, he drew himself, very cautiously, up on the rocks, and looked about him. Nothing of an alarming nature was in sight, unless, indeed, it was the sky which clearly betokened that a storm, and a terrible one at that, was about to burst over the island. The afternoon was not so far advanced as he had imagined from the gloom of the cavern, but the western heavens were shrouded by an ominous blackness that was rapidly advancing, and behind which the sun was already hidden.

Stooping and moving warily from cover to cover, the negro finally reached the field. A quick but comprehensive survey failing to disclose any cause for alarm, he entered it, and made toward a bunch

of bananas that hung, yellow and tempting, but a few yards from the wall. Reaching this, he was in the act of cutting it when a savage yell rang in his ears, his knife was struck from his grasp, and he was hurled to the ground.

The Indians having fruitlessly scoured every part of the island in an effort to discover the trespassers on their domain, had concealed themselves at various points, and waited patiently for the appearance of the unknown invaders. Rendered uneasy and made anxious to depart by the approaching storm, most of them had gone to their canoes ere Cæsar left the cavern. The only two left behind were about to do likewise, when one of them discovered him just as he was entering the field. Gliding toward the unsuspecting negro with the silence of a shadow, the Indian sprang upon his victim, and bore him to the earth ere his presence was known.

Although thus taken at a disadvantage, and knocked nearly breathless by the sudden onset, Cæsar did not yield without a struggle. In this his great strength must ultimately have given him the victory, had not a second Indian, attracted by the yell of the first, arrived upon the scene just as the

negro had gained the upper hand, and was choking the breath from his adversary. The new-comer was armed with a gun, and by a blow from this he laid Cæsar senseless on the ground. When, a few seconds later, he recovered and staggered to his feet, he found his wrists tied together behind him, a rope about his neck, and the shirt stripped from his back, to replace that of the first Indian, whose own had been torn to shreds during the brief struggle.

“Good,” grunted the second Indian in English, as Cæsar stood up. “Now other man, where him? Tell me, quick. ’Spose not tell, me shoot. Sabe?”

With this the Indian cocked his gun and raised its muzzle to a level with the negro’s eyes. Into its black depths the latter gazed unflinchingly; but he answered never a word. Even at the command of Death itself he would not betray a descendant of Sir Richard Allanson.

“You no sabe Englis’?” demanded the Indian.

“He talks only Spanish,” said the other Indian in his own tongue. “We must take him to Mateo, who speaks his language, and will make him understand.” Then to the prisoner he cried “Anda!” at the same time giving the rope about his neck a jerk.

Thus led by one Indian, and followed by another holding a loaded gun in readiness to shoot at the first sign of an attempt at escape, Cæsar was compelled to walk to where the canoes had made a landing. Here, to their dismay, the Indians found but one remaining. Their comrades, fearful of the gathering storm, and anxious to gain a safe lee ere it should burst, had started off without them, and were now but specks in the distance.

After a moment's consultation, Cæsar's captors decided to make the attempt to overtake their friends. The negro was suddenly tripped up, so that he fell heavily to the ground, and in this ignominious position, with the gun still pointing at his head, was forced to have his ankles tightly bound with the rope taken from about his neck for this purpose. Being thus rendered utterly helpless, he was bundled into the canoe with as scant ceremony as though he had been a log of wood, and the craft was shoved from shore.

Lying in the bottom of the canoe, Cæsar could see nothing save the black fall of storm clouds overhead, and the Indian who owned the gun, standing in the stern urging the light craft forward with pow-

erful strokes of a long-handled paddle. The other Indian stood in the bow working with equal energy. With each stroke they cast anxious glances toward the windward horizon, which was now lighted with an unearthly glow, to note the entrance of the storm. The black waters were spread like oil about them, while the air was oppressively motionless and devoid of life.

While Cæsar pondered as to his own fate, and what would become of those whom he had left in the cavern, the air became filled with an uncanny moaning, that speedily deepened to a hoarse-throated roar. The dread powers of the storm-fiend were about to be loosed, and it behooved all who might, to avoid the onset. The canoe was midway of a wide space of open water, beyond which lay shelter and safety. An attempt to regain the island would be as perilous as to hold to the present course; and bending low, that their bodies might offer the less resistance to the blast, the dusky paddlers wielded their springing blades with fiercer energy and a grim determination. The canoe sprang forward like a frightened animal, but it could not escape. With an exulting scream the combined powers of wind

and sea leaped upon it, and in a moment it was the centre of a seething chaos.

As the light craft was whirled around, the Indian in the bow flung his whole weight upon his paddle, in a futile effort to hold the canoe to its course. As he did so, the tough blade snapped. Instantly he who had wielded it lost his balance and plunged overboard. As he rose to the surface, his companion, leaning far over the side, attempted to clutch him and effect a rescue. To Cæsar, who believed that he was being borne to a certain death by torture, the opportunity thus afforded to rid himself of both his enemies by a single blow seemed too favorable to be neglected. With a mighty effort he managed, in spite of his bonds, to launch himself forward and deliver a kick with both his fettered feet, that lifted the second Indian from the canoe as though he were projected from a catapult. Ere he rose to the surface, the canoe had been swept beyond his reach. A moment later it disappeared in the spray-thickened gloom.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NIGHT AT SEA ON AN OVERTURNED CANOE.

WHIRLING and tossing, but ever hurried forward by the furious gale, the Indian canoe, with its solitary and helplessly bound occupant, was driven out to sea. With each foot of progress the waves that sought to engulf it became larger and more threatening. Lying at full length in the bottom of the menaced craft, the negro was stolidly resigned to the fate that he believed awaited him. He could do nothing to help himself, and had no idea of the direction in which his craft was being driven. At any instant, he knew, it might be dashed in splinters on the coral heads of some outlying reef, or overturned by the great seas that beat at it so savagely. In either case the result would be the same, so far as he was concerned, for he was fettered beyond a possibility of saving himself.

Every now and then an eager wave lapped over a

gunwale, as though impatient for the prey awaiting it, and thus water gradually accumulated in the bottom of the canoe, until Cæsar lay in quite a pool. At first he did not notice this. Then it offended him as being a needless addition to his misery, and he reviled it with strange Spanish oaths. Suddenly, and with an amazing facility, his curses were changed to blessings. Under the relaxing influence of a thorough soaking, the buckskin thong confining his wrists was stretching, and he could move his hands. Now he felt eagerly for the deepest water, and sought to have it cover his wrists, while a germ of hope sprang into his breast. He knew himself to be utterly helpless as he was; but, if he could only free his hands, how many things would become possible.

So the captive soaked his bonds in the blessed water, that, under guise of an enemy, was proving so good a friend, and tugged at them regardless of the pain to his swollen wrists, until at length one hand was wrenched free. With this all his courage returned, in spite of the hurricane that shrieked about him with the voices of ten thousand demons, the leaping seas, and the darkness in which the wild

scene was now enshrouded, this descendant of Black Cæsar faced the situation with all the undaunted spirit of his long-ago ancestor. As soon as his numbed fingers could be made to perform their task, he untied the rope that bound his ankles, and gratefully stretched his cramped limbs. When their circulation was somewhat restored, he began feeling about in the canoe for a paddle with which to head his craft into the wind, or for a bit of old canvas and a pole with which to make a sea-anchor, or drag, for the same purpose. His search was in vain, its only rewards being a rifle and a grain, or fish-spear. The paddles had disappeared with their owners, and, if there had ever been a sail, it must have blown away.

In all his movements Cæsar was obliged to exercise the utmost care to avoid capsizing his wildly tossing craft. As it drifted broadside to the seas, the only wonder was that it had not capsized long before. Still, the negro felt confident that, with the free use of all his limbs, he could keep her right side up for some hours longer at least.

Failing to find anything with which to navigate his little ship, he next began to search for something

in the shape of provisions, or a vessel that might contain fresh water, for he was suffering greatly from both hunger and thirst. In one extreme end of the canoe his groping hand touched a bottle that rolled away. Cæsar strove to regain it by a quick movement, and the next instant was struggling in the sea beneath the capsized canoe.

As he swam from under it, a great wave dashed him against its side with a bruising and almost stunning violence. Still, the canoe formed his sole reliance; for to leave it meant certain death, even to a stout swimmer like himself, and again he cautiously approached its black bulk. He was hampered in his swimming by the rope that was still attached to one of his ankles, and he bitterly regretted the neglect that had allowed it to remain there. This time a sea, lifting him above the canoe, dropped him squarely across it, and he clung to the rounded surface as best he might with both arms and legs. For a few minutes he succeeded in maintaining his position in spite of the breaking seas, and then a giant wave brushed him from the slippery resting-place, as though he had been a fly. The struggle to regain it was harder this time than before, and the strong

swimmer realized that another such experience must be his last. Again was he hampered by the dragging rope, and when he finally found himself once more astride the overturned canoe, his first act was to disengage it. He was about to allow it to slip overboard, as being of no use to him in his present position, when, like a flash, the thought came to him that in it lay his salvation. In less than a minute a bight of the rope had been slipped over one end of the canoe, and dragged aft to about 'mid-ship. Then Cæsar, lying at full length, passed the ends over his body, drew them taut, and knotted them fast. Now the seas might beat upon him as much as they pleased; but, so long as the rope held, they could not separate him from the canoe to which he was securely lashed.

Thus, through the long hours of that terrible night of storm and blackness poor Cæsar drifted at the mercy of wind and waves. His head was as often under water as above it, he was chilled almost to numbness, and every inch of his body was bruised by the incessant buffetings of the pitiless seas.

It was a memorable night for all three of our castaways, and it is an open question as to which of

them suffered the most ere its blackness was dispelled by the longed-for daylight: Cæsar, lashed to his bit of wave-tossed wood, or the two lads whom he had left behind amid the unseen terrors of the submarine cavern.

CHAPTER XXV.

NEGRO, CANOE, SHARK, AND TURTLE.

LONGINGLY as Cæsar watched for daylight, eagerly lifting his head, and seeking to detect its faintest ray whenever he was tossed aloft on the crest of a sea, he was asleep when it came. The gale broke soon after midnight; and, in the succeeding calm, the waves so quickly subsided that they soon ceased to break over him. Thus relieved from immediate danger, the negro fell into a sleep of utter exhaustion. From this he was rudely awakened, some hours later, by a severe blow on one of his feet that had slipped into the water.

Lifting his head, Cæsar gazed anxiously about him. The sun had just risen, the overturned canoe was rising and falling gently on the regular swells of unruffled water, and a snow-white pelican was fishing for its breakfast near at hand. Beyond this nothing was to be seen. There was no land in sight,

no vessel, no sign of life in all the vast expanse of sea and sky. Had it not been for the pain in his foot, that remained as evidence of the recent blow, Cæsar would have concluded that he had dreamed of being struck. The aching member trailed just on the surface of the water, and as its owner gazed inquiringly at it, a dark object shot up from the dim depths directly beneath it.

Quickly as Cæsar drew up his foot, it was again grazed by the open jaws of the shark that had coveted it for his breakfast. With a loud cry and a violent splashing, Cæsar caused the cowardly monster to beat a hurried retreat, and was greatly relieved to find that nothing more dangerous than a shark was striving to eat him. He held a profound contempt for these scavengers of the sea, and had stabbed many a one to death in fair fight. He knew that they only attacked human beings when the latter were dead, or so motionless as to appear so, and that a swimmer, with life enough in him to keep up a splashing, was safe from the savage cowards, no matter how large or how numerous they were. Still, the presence of this shark, which Cæsar had seen was a hammer-head of great size, filled him

with uneasiness. The overturned canoe floated so low that it was impossible to keep all portions of his body out of the water at once, and it would be equally impossible to maintain a constant splashing. He knew the wolf-like tenacity with which a shark will linger in the vicinity of any possible prey, after once making up its mind to obtain it, and he realized that, unless he could make some radical change in his position, he must, sooner or later, fall a victim to those terrible jaws. What could he do? Would it be possible to turn the canoe over and bail it out? He doubted it; but, as no other plan offered, that one must be tried.

It took him a long time to unfasten the rope by which he was lashed to the canoe, and, while he was thus engaged, he saw his watchful enemy repeatedly circle around him, though always at a respectful distance.

“If me hab harpoon, me fix you, you ole debbil,” muttered the negro. As he had none he was forced to content himself with an occasional shake of his fist and volleys of abusive language. When he finally disengaged himself from the lashing, and had again secured it about the body of the canoe, he

slipped into the water. Then, aided by the useful rope which afforded him a hold, he finally succeeded, after a long struggle, in righting the craft so that it once more floated on an even keel. Of course it was filled with water so that its gunwales were on a level with the surrounding surface. To hold on with one hand and scoop this water out with the other, at the same time keeping a watchful eye on the shark, was so tedious and laborious an undertaking that it was a full hour before the gunwales showed an inch above the surface. Had the sea been even rippled by a breeze the task would have been impossible.

At the end of another hour, when the first puffs of the regular northeast trade-wind were just beginning to make themselves felt, the canoe was so far lightened that it would support the swimmer's entire weight, and still show a trifle of free board. Once inside of it he could scoop out the water by double handfuls, and by noon the lonely navigator had the satisfaction of finding himself once more afloat in a comparatively dry craft. At the same time he was suffering greatly from thirst, hunger, and exhaustion. The sun's vertical rays beat down

on him with a fervent heat, from which there was no shadow of escape. By good luck he caught a flying-fish in his hands. It was one of a dozen or more that, pursued by a fierce bonito, darted from the water and skimmed through the air a few feet above the surface. They did not flutter their wings as birds do, nor did they alter their course from the straight line which carried them directly over the canoe. Although the one captured by Cæsar was full-grown, and though he had eaten every morsel of it within three minutes, there was so very little of it that it served only to whet his appetite. When, therefore, an hour or so later, he caught sight of a monster sea-turtle asleep on the water but a short distance ahead of him, he determined to make an effort for its capture. He was quite hopeful of succeeding in this, as he drifted closer, and saw by the large barnacles attached to the animal's shell that it was of great age, and presumably subject to an infirmity of aged turtles that prevents them from sinking beneath the surface of the water.

The sole object of which Cæsar was now possessed was the rope by which his legs had been bound, and which had already proved so useful to him. Mak-

ing a noose in one end of this, and fastening the other to the bow of the canoe, he crouched low, and, with hungry eyes fixed on his anticipated prey, awaited, with intense eagerness, the moment when he should drift within reach of the unconscious turtle.

As the canoe, moved by a light breeze, ranged abreast of the huge creature, it was still some six feet distant. In another minute it would be past, and drifting away. Cæsar could not bear to lose the opportunity, and he did not. With the free end of the rope in one hand, he leaped from the canoe, and landed squarely on the turtle's back. Ere the terrified beast could comprehend the nature of this bewildering form of attack, the noose had been slipped over one of its after-flippers and drawn taut.

Now ensued a struggle, that, in spite of its deadly earnestness, would have proved comical enough to a spectator. Lying flat on the back of his captive, which was so much larger than he thought that it must have weighed nearly, if not quite, five hundred pounds, Cæsar attempted to turn its head in the direction of the canoe. At the same time the turtle, displaying immense strength and with so vigorous



“ HE LEAPED FROM THE CANOE AND LANDED SQUARELY ON THE TURTLE’S BACK.”

a movement of its powerful flippers that the water about it fairly boiled, was evidently determined to go in exactly the opposite direction.

Finally, realizing that, with all his advantage of position, he could accomplish nothing where he was, Cæsar decided to regain the canoe, which he supposed was towing close behind him. To his horror, as he glanced in that direction, he discovered it to be nearly out of sight in the distance—with the monster turtle's first furious struggles, the rope attaching it to the canoe had parted as though it were a bit of twine, though of course unnoticed by Cæsar, whose entire attention was concentrated upon the subjugation of his refractory captive.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CÆSAR AS A MERMAID.

ALTHOUGH the negro instantly recognized the desperate nature of his situation, its absurdity was also too apparent to be overlooked.

“Cæsar cotch plenty turkle; but dis de fustes time ebber a turkle cotch him, an’ run away wif him too,” he exclaimed to himself, as he ruefully watched his canoe vanish in the distance. “Bimeby ole man shark comin’ erlong, an’ him get me dish yer time shuah!”

It did seem more than likely that this prophecy would prove true; for, notwithstanding the turtle’s enormous size, Cæsar’s weight was sufficient to sink it so low in the water that its back was submerged, and only the upper half of the negro’s body appeared above the surface. This carrying of weight did not, however, appear to materially retard the animal’s progress, and it continued to swim rapidly in the

direction it had chosen from the first, which happened to be easterly. How long he would be able to cling to his precarious seat, Cæsar could not guess; but he fully realized that if nightfall found him still in that position, his chances for looking upon another sunrise would be very slim. He, therefore, strained his eyes in every direction, but especially that in which he was borne, for the welcome glimpse of a sail or the smoke of a steamer.

About this time a land company was seeking to enhance the value of a sixty-mile strip of sea-beach, that they owned on the eastern coast of Florida, by planting it with cocoa-nuts, to the growth of which that climate is well adapted. They had already planted many thousands of these great nuts among the sand dunes, and would have had enough on hand to complete their undertaking, had not a quantity of them, carelessly left too close to the water's edge, been swept away by the recent hurricane. The moment this loss was discovered, the planters ordered their swift little schooner *Shark*, which had already made the voyage many times, to proceed once more to Baracoa, on the eastern end of the island of Cuba, for a new supply of nuts. Starting

at once, in obedience to this order, and fanned along by the northeast trade, that began to blow on the upper coast as soon as the storm was past, the *Shark* quickly lost sight of the low-lying land, and would evidently cover a hundred miles of water before nightfall.

About the middle of the afternoon the man at the wheel roused the captain, who was dozing in a hammock on the shady side of the after deck-house, with the announcement that there was something curious in sight.

"Where away?" demanded the captain, yawning sleepily.

"Off the lee bow, sir; but working dead to windward. At times it looks to be a whale; and then at times it does n't."

It took the captain a full minute to make out the moving black dot, to which the helmsman directed his gaze. The moment he brought it within the focus of his powerful glass, all his inertness vanished, and he became instantly wide-awake, not to say greatly excited.

"Mr. Griggs!" he shouted to the mate, who was busy about something in the forward part of the

schooner. "Step here a moment, sir, and as quickly as you can, please."

When the mate obeyed this summons, looking aloft and all about him as he walked aft, to see what had gone wrong, the captain thrust the glass into his hand, and, pointing out the strange object, bade him to examine it closely.

As he gazed the mate's weather-beaten face grew visibly pale, and when he, at length, lowered the glass from his eyes, he was evidently badly rattled.

"Well, sir!" asked the captain, impatiently, "what do you make it?"

"I think it must be the devil, sir; for in all my sea-going I never seen nothing like it afore. It's black, and it looks human, in a way. It's moving through the water too, at a great rate; but it is n't swimming, only just waving its arms. It's got horns, that I'll swear to, and I'm afeard, sir, that it's after us."

"I wonder if there can be any truth in the yarns about mermaids, and if this is one of them?" remarked the captain, reflectively.

"Sartain there is, sir! Sartain!" exclaimed the mate, brightening at this simple, and to him, per-

fectly plausible explanation of the phenomenon. "Though I never set my own eyes on one of the critters, I 've seen a plenty as has. These is the very waters they mostly uses in, too. Yes, sir, it 's sure to be a mermaid, and we must kill it, or it 'll have every blessed one of us afore the v'y'ge is ended. I 'll get the gun, and try a shot for luck."

"Hold hard!" commanded the captain, "If its the devil, shooting won't harm it; while if it 's a human being, you 'd be committing murder. If it 's a mermaid, I 'm going to try and capture it. Why, man, it would make our everlasting fortune in a museum."

"Our everlasting misfortin', more like," growled the mate.

"Keep her away," added the captain, turning to the man at the wheel, "and run alongside of that thing, while I make a bowline ready to heave over its head."

"Don't ye, Cap'n! Don't ye resk it," expostulated the mate.

"That will do, sir!" answered the captain, shortly. He had no trace of superstition in his make-up, and was determined to investigate the approaching phenomenon in the most thorough manner.

By this time the whole crew were aroused to the

fact of something unusual taking place, and were strung along the lee rail, watching, with conflicting emotions, in which fear and curiosity were equally blended, the strangest sight any of them had ever witnessed at sea.

As the captain took up his position by the cat-head, with a running bowline in his hand, while the mate still stood near the wheel, the strange object drew so close that all hands saw it to be a human being, at least from the waist up. They agreed that it was black; but whether it was a man or a woman was still uncertain, though most of the spectators thought the latter. They could even hear its voice uttering incoherent and mysterious cries.

“Steady!” cried the captain, “don’t run it down. Just steer alongside.” As he spoke he flung his bowline deftly over the creature’s head.

At that moment the mate, with the cowardice of a superstitious nature, seized the wheel from the helmsman, and jammed the tiller over to port. The schooner, with ready obedience, swung to starboard, and, in another instant, amid distracting cries from all the spectators, the mysterious object had been squarely run down, and was lost to sight.

A minute later half a dozen pair of stalwart arms tugging at the captain's rope, hauled, from the water, and laid on deck, the apparently lifeless body of a young negro, whose only garment was a pair of ragged canvas trousers.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON BOARD THE SCHOONER "SHARK."

CÆSAR'S hopes had been raised to the highest pitch by the discovery of the schooner long before those on board caught sight of him, and by every means in his power he had urged his strange steed forward with a view to intercepting her. With all his efforts he could not effect much in this direction, for the turtle insisted on frequent intervals of rest from its exertions. However, when it did move, it swam with great speed, and always on the same course, or directly against the wind. In the present case this happened to be exactly the direction Cæsar wished to take, and his only fear was lest the schooner should pass without her people seeing him. To attract attention he began to wave his arms wildly as soon as her hull came into view, and, hardly knowing what he did, to shout at the top of his voice. At length he was

wellnigh overcome with joy to note that he had been discovered, and that the schooner's course was altered so that she headed directly for him.

Until she approached so close that he could plainly see the faces of those on board, it never occurred to him that he was regarded as anything but a commonplace sailor, shipwrecked in one of the ordinary ways, or that they would not rescue him in the regular manner by means of a boat. He was somewhat dismayed, therefore, to see a man standing in the bows of the schooner and swinging a noosed rope above his head, as though it were to be flung at him. He yelled for the schooner to keep off and not run him down, but as he used a Spanish patois that would have been unintelligible to all on board, even could they have distinguished its words above the rush of water under their bows, no heed was paid to his cries. So the rope was flung, and settled about his body. At the same moment, to Cæsar's horror, the vessel, taking a sudden sheer, was headed so directly for him that another instant would have seen him crushed to death by her heavy cutwater. With a despairing cry he gave a mighty, backward's spring. It saved his life,

but did not prevent him from being struck so cruel a blow as to deprive him of all consciousness.

When he was laid on deck and it was seen that he was indeed a human being, murmurs of dismay and astonishment ran through the crew. The mate was horrified to find how nearly his ill-considered act had made him a murderer, and the captain was filled with wrath.

"How dared you do such a thing?" he thundered.

"I thought it was a mermaid, sartin I did, Cap'n," answered the crestfallen mate, humbly, "and I knowed if we did n't kill her, she'd kill us."

"Well, sir, you've no business to do any thinking while I am on board. If I ever catch you at it again I'll break you, and see to it that you never obtain another certificate. Now turn to and do what you can for this poor fellow."

They dashed water in Cæsar's face, and prying open his set teeth nearly choked him with the liquor they poured down his throat. After a while he recovered sufficiently to murmur "agua," and some one understood that he was perishing of thirst. They gave him water sparingly, and he made a

brave effort to struggle to his feet, but sank back to the deck with a groan, and closed his eyes. He hardly opened them again in the next forty-eight hours. During this period of recuperation his rescuers plied him with food and drink whenever he showed any signs of consciousness; but in all these hours their curiosity regarding his remarkable arrival among them was forced to remain unsatisfied. The last few moments of his rescue had been so confusing and so filled with consternation, that no one had seen the turtle, nor taken note of what it was that supported the black man in the water.

“He must have been floating on a barrel,” said one, “and his weight sunk it below the surface.”

“Barrel nothing!” exclaimed the mate, who overheard this remark. “How could a barrel travel at a twenty-knot rate an’ to windward too? I tell ye that ’s what he was logging when I fust sot eyes on him through the old man’s glass. Yes, siree! Coming head on to the wind like a steamer, he wor, and, come to think of it, I ’d be a’most willing to take my affidavy that I seen smoke too. Not regular black, coal smoke, you understand, but sort o’ yallar an’ blue like. I tell ye, mates, there ’s suthin wrong

about a craft like that, an' the sooner we gets clear of it the better for us. I won't say that I 'd go so far as to chuck him overboard, unless we could n't ship him no other way, an' I 'm willing to resk his being aboard till we make port; but not a minute longer."

Thus poor Cæsar was regarded with great suspicion by his shipmates of the schooner *Shark*, and even after he was in a condition to talk they were very shy of holding any communication with him.

The captain, who was still determined to solve the mystery of his coming, believed him able to speak only Spanish, and waited until he could procure an interpreter before questioning him.

Thus matters stood when, two days after Cæsar was picked up, the *Shark* dropped anchor in the harbor of Baracoa, and the captain, taking Mr. Griggs with him, went ashore to see about procuring a cargo. In less than an hour they returned, bringing with them a strange gentleman and a few pieces of hand baggage that evidently belonged to him. To the great surprise of the crew, the captain no sooner stepped on board than he ordered sails hoisted and the anchor to be got up. A few

minutes later the *Shark* was standing out of the harbor she had so recently entered, but without having taken in a pound of cargo.

It was not until the schooner was well under way, and everything was snugged down, that the mate condescended to explain to the crew the meaning of this new departure.

"I telled ye we would n't hev no luck," he said, "long 's that black jo we picked up, cavortin' round the hocean without no wisible means of support, was on board. So, sure enough, me an' the old man had n't no sooner got ashore, than we found we could n't get no cocoa-nuts inside of a week, and mebbe not then. While we wuz a considerin' what we 'd best do, along comes a gent what wanted to charter us to take him over to Port-au-Prince in Hayti. Says he 's got a wessel over there, wot's bin seized for smuggling guns and sich like to the revolutioners. Her name 's the '*Regret*' nigh as I could make out, an' I only hope as we won't have no cause to regret the job we 've undertook. I advised agin the v'y'ge, seeing as we 're likely to be seized ourselves by them blamed Hay-ty-ans; but the old man would n't listen. He patched up some

sort of a trade with the gent, an' here we be. If there don't happen to be no American man-o'-war in port, we'll be apt to be a blamed sight longer getting away than we are in getting thar, for I tell ye luck 's agin us long's we've got that black Jonah on board."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE OWNER OF THE "EGRET."

BY this time Cæsar had so far recovered from his recent thrilling experiences as to be able to perform a fair share of the ship's work, and the mate saw to it that he was kept constantly busy. When the schooner was leaving the harbor of Baracoa he ventured to ask one of the men if they were bound back to Florida.

"So you can speak English, can you, ye black swab!" exclaimed the man, without answering his question. "Tell us, then, wot sort of a hinfarnal craft you was navigating when we picked you up."

"Him be a turkle," answered Cæsar, simply.

"A turtle? Ho, ho! ha, ha! That's a good one. D'ye hear that, mates? This tar-coated liar says he wor cruising on board a turtle that time we picked him up in the middle of the Gulf."

The rest of the crew joined in the torrent of ridicule directed at poor Cæsar on account of this statement, and so made his life a burden that he took refuge in a sullen silence, refusing to hold any further communication with them. As a result he was regarded with a greater suspicion and dislike than ever, and was so nearly starved by his tormentors that he made up his mind to escape from the schooner in the very first port at which she should touch.

"Me tellin' yo' ole marse shark don' cotch yo' off'n dat ar turkle," he would say to himself, "but I ain't 'low him be er shark ship, fill wif white sharks, same like dish yer crew."

In the meantime the captain of the *Shark* was so deeply interested in the story of his passenger's tribulations, and in planning with him for the recovery of his vessel, that he temporarily forgot all about the mysterious castaway whom he had picked up in mid-ocean.

The passenger was no other than Mr. Almy, owner of the yacht *Egret*, which, before he left Havana for an overland trip across the island, he had ordered to meet him at Santiago de Cuba. He

was greatly annoyed, on reaching that port, to find that his yacht had not yet put in an appearance, and his annoyance was increased by the delay, without tidings from her, that followed. At length there came a rumor, by way of Baracoa, that such a yacht had been seized on the coast of Hayti, by a government gunboat, in the very act of smuggling ashore, for the benefit of the revolutionists, muskets and other contraband articles. By telegraphing to the American Minister at Hayti Mr. Almy learned that this rumor was true, and that the yacht in question was indeed his. He was also informed that the crew of the *Egret* were in prison at Port-au-Prince, at which place the yacht lay, liable at any moment to be condemned by the authorities, and seized for government use. The minister concluded his message with the assurance that, unless Mr. Almy made his way to Port-au-Prince with all speed, he would stand no chance of recovering his property.

In this emergency the *Egret's* owner sent his family back to the United States by the first steamer, and then tried to charter a vessel to carry him to Hayti. Failing in this at Santiago, he pro-

ceeded to Baracoa, where he met with equal ill success until the arrival of the *Shark*. Tempted by his liberal offer the schooner's captain agreed to make the run across the windward passage, and take his chances of getting clear from Port-au-Prince without detention. He did not know just how this was to be accomplished; for, during a revolution, all strange vessels, unless powerful enough to defy the authorities, were liable to tedious delays and heavy expenses, if not actual seizure, in any port of the Black Republic.

Finally, however, the captain of the *Shark* hit upon a plan. "I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Almy," he said. "You see, I can't afford to take any risks, and so I don't propose to go a great way into that harbor. I've got two boats aboard though, and one of them is a skiff that I can get along very well without. I've also got a nigger castaway, whom I meant to set ashore in Baracoa; but I reckon he'll be just as well off in Hayti. Now if you will buy the skiff, I'll throw in the nigger to act as crew, and set you adrift just inside the mouth of the harbor, but within a safe distance of shore, which you can then easily reach by rowing. At

the same time the *Shark* will be showing her heels to Port-au-Prince, and making good time back toward where she came from."

Mr. Almy readily consented to this plan, while poor Cæsar was not consulted regarding it, being merely ordered to tumble into the skiff and row the gentleman ashore. He obeyed this order in dumb silence, as he had all others; but, when the skiff was about half-way up the harbor, and the schooner was so rapidly disappearing that it was evident they were to hold no further communication with her, he rested on his oars and said:

"'Scuse me, Señor, but yo' min' tellin' me who yo is, an' whar we gwine, an' what we gwine do when we gettin' dar?"

"My name is Almy," answered the gentleman, surprised that any one coming from the *Shark* could be ignorant of his personality or his business in that place. "I am the owner of a yacht which, for some reason that I can't understand, came to this island, and is said to have been engaged in smuggling arms to the revolutionists. If I am not greatly mistaken, there she lies now." With this Mr. Almy pointed to a trim-looking schooner lying at anchor not far

from where they were, and directly under the guns of a battery.

Cæsar turned and gazed keenly at the vessel thus indicated. "What yo' call um?" he asked.

"Her name is the *Egret*."

The negro scrutinized Mr. Almy closely.

"An' yo' is her cap'n?" he asked.

"No, I am only her owner."

"Den yo' is n't de one what would n't stop to pick a po' brack man off 'n er wreck; but run away, an' lef' yo' mate an' cabin boy at de same time."

"I don't know what you mean."

"No, yo' sholy is n't de one. He name Stare."

"Staver, Captain Staver," corrected Mr. Almy; "but what do you know of him? and who are you? and where do you come from, anyway?"

"What place yo' is callin' dish yer?" asked Cæsar.

"This place? why, it is Port-au-Prince on the island of Hayti, of course."

"Hayti, dat ar' de name, what Sir Rich speakin' ob, an' him say de *Regret* comin' hyar wif gun, an' ca'tridge, an' sich, an' Cap' Staver, dat de name. Now I is know dat ar craf'."

“What do you know? and what are you talking about? and who is this Sir Rich?”

“Sir Rich? Sholy you mus’ know him, when him bin mate ob dat bery schooner. He name Marse Gale Ellicot, but ole Sir Rich him great gran’fodder.”

“Where is he? and how do you happen to know him? and what did he have to do with this outrage?” demanded Mr. Almy, excitedly.

“Me lef’ him in de cave, long wif Marse Penrose,” replied Cæsar, “an’ if me ain’t gittin’ back bery quick, dey is have trouble shuah.” Then, in his broken and hardly comprehensible English, he related the whole story of his adventures in connection with Gale Ellicot and Aleck Penrose. When he concluded, Mr. Almy was possessed of a much clearer idea of what had happened to his yacht than at any time since learning of her seizure.

Suddenly, when the occupants of the skiff were still unravelling the perplexities of their situation, a guard boat filled with black soldiers from the battery ran alongside and, after a few unintelligible questions, placed both Mr. Almy and Cæsar under arrest and carried them ashore.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CÆSAR AS A SOLDIER.

TO be arrested is an unpleasant experience, even when one is innocent of wrong-doing ; and when, as in the present case, the arrest is followed by a night of misery amid the filth and vermin of a suffocatingly close guard-house, the unpleasantness of the experience is decidedly increased. Mr. Almy was furious, not so much at the arrest as at the imprisonment that followed, and the obstinacy that refused to inform him why he was arrested, to give his case a prompt investigation before some one in authority, or even to allow him to communicate with the American Minister. In this emergency Cæsar, who was his fellow-prisoner, came to the yacht owner's relief ; for, while the black guards refused to hold any communication with the white man, they were less reticent with one of their own color. Thus the young negro finally succeeded in

bribing one of them to carry a message to the American Minister.

Since the episode of the *Egret* the Haytian authorities had watched all American vessels very closely, and the strange movements of the schooner *Shark* had caused the occupants of the skiff that came from her to be regarded with great suspicion. This was so deep-rooted that all the influence of the American Minister, backed by that of the commander of a United States man-of-war that happened to be in the harbor, was required to overcome it and effect Mr. Almy's release on the day following that of his arrest. As for poor Cæsar, even all this influence could not avail to free him. He could not claim to be an American citizen, nor could he give a satisfactory explanation of how he happened to be on board the *Shark*. So he was offered his choice of being shot as a spy, or of enlisting in the Haytian army. Of course he accepted the latter alternative, and within twenty-four hours of the time when he had anxiously inquired of Mr. Almy what country they were approaching, he found himself enrolled as one of its armed defenders. There was no time for the drilling of awkward squads in the Haytian army,

and from the hour that a man enlisted in it, or was pressed into service, he was a full-fledged soldier. Thus before Cæsar had gained even the rudiments of a soldier's education, he was furnished with an old musket and assigned to guard duty at the *carcel* or city prison. In this building were confined the captain and crew of the yacht *Egret*; and, sorely as they chafed at their detention, they were in hopes of a speedy release.

Captain Staver claimed that the contraband articles brought to the island by the *Egret* had been smuggled on board by the mate of the yacht without his knowledge. He stated that, owing to his own exposure and exertions during the gale which struck the *Egret* soon after leaving Havana, he had been taken seriously ill and confined to his room. That during his illness the mate was in full charge of the vessel, and that, instead of taking her directly to Santiago he had directed her course to a portion of the Haytian coast known to be held by the rebels. That he had there compelled the crew to land the contraband articles, though at the time they knew nothing of the contents of the packages they were handling. That during his illness his only attendant

was the cabin boy, a lad who had been engaged by the mate, and was known to be in that officer's confidence. That this boy had told him, when the schooner came to anchor, that she was in the harbor of Santiago, and that the objects being landed were water-casks. He claimed that the first intimation he received of anything being wrong, was when the Haytian gunboat captured the yacht. He also said that upon the approach of the gunboat the mate and cabin boy of the *Egret* had made good their escape to land.

This plausible story was corroborated in every detail by every member of the *Egret's* crew. In its further support Captain Staver had, by the aid of certain drugs, so successfully simulated illness, that, when the yacht was captured, he was found lying in his berth, to all appearances a very sick man. Although he was now evidently recovering, he still feigned such extreme weakness that he was given a greater freedom, and was less carefully guarded than the rest of the prisoners.

Up to the time of Mr. Almy's appearance on the scene, Captain Staver's story had been so fully believed by the American Minister, that he had been

most active in his efforts to secure the release of the prisoners. Now, however, in view of the character given to both the mate and the cabin boy of the *Egret* by Mr. Almy, and the undeviating tale told by Cæsar in the several severe examinations he was forced to undergo, the eyes of both the minister and the government authorities were opened to the true state of affairs.

About this time, too, one of the prisoners was recognized as having been concerned in a previous revolution, and banished from the island, under penalty of being shot if he returned to it. Now, under promise that this sentence should be remitted, he turned state's evidence, and affirmed the truth of Cæsar's story. He furthermore stated that the scheme of supplying the rebels with arms, and also of turning the *Egret* over to them for use as a gunboat, had been fully matured before she left Boston. He believed it would have been attempted long before it was, had it not been for the incorruptibility of the young mate and the difficulty of getting rid of him.

These disclosures of course put an end to all thoughts of releasing the *Egret's* crew, and the only question now to be considered, was what form of

punishment should be dealt out to them. There was a strong feeling in favor of the execution—at least of their leader,—as a warning to others who might be inclined to embark in enterprises similar to the one he had undertaken. Captain Staver would undoubtedly have suffered this fate, but for the presence in the harbor of the United States man-of-war, whose commander declared that no American citizen should be executed for a political offence in the Black Republic, while he was there to prevent it.

By some means the prisoners became acquainted with the foregoing facts, and they determined to attempt a long-meditated plan of escape while there was still a chance of its success. Ever since his incarceration, the supposed sick man, who had lain so quietly in bed all day apparently too weak to move, had been actively engaged at night in sawing iron bars and filing rivets. At length every member of his crew could cast aside his fetters at a moment's notice, and the iron grating of a window in the rear of the prison was ready to be wrenched out with slight effort. The *Egret* still lay in the harbor with a guard of but four men on board, it being supposed that her safety was assured by the

guns of the battery, close to which she was moored. Captain Staver was willing to risk a fire from these if once he could regain possession of the yacht on some dark night. To accomplish this, the fugitives would have to pass but a single sentry who patrolled the space immediately behind the prison wall, and who was always a raw recruit, the more experienced soldiers being invariably sent to the front. Thus, even if this guard should discover and challenge the escaping prisoners, it was believed that he would be confused by skilfully worded answers, and so restrained from firing until they could approach close enough to capture and disarm him by a sudden rush. With this sentry disposed of, it would be comparatively easy to find a boat in which to attempt the boarding and capture of the *Egret*.

CHAPTER XXX.

FIRE FIRST AND THEN CHALLENGE.

AT the particular hour of the dark night selected by Captain Staver and his companions as being favorable to their meditated escape, the most recent addition to the Haytian army happened to be on sentry duty behind the prison, a post that he now occupied for the first time. As he paced slowly up and down his beat, he was also very busily thinking.

“In case you note the advance of any suspicious person, challenge and count five ; then, if you have not received a satisfactory answer, fire, and call the corporal of the guard.” These had been the final instructions given by the officer who had stationed the new recruit at that post. As he walked back and forth, with his old musket awkwardly shouldered, and his whole appearance as un-soldier-like as can well be imagined, the sentry, at whom Captain Earl Staver and his men would only have laughed,

could they have seen him, repeated his instructions over and over, to impress them indelibly upon his memory. Gradually, however, his thoughts drifted away, until they were with the distant friends whom he had left in the cavern of the Coral Ship, and he wondered if they had escaped from that predicament. Should he ever see them again, or know of their fate? Should—— The sentry's meditations were suddenly interrupted by certain mysterious sounds, close at hand, and, thus recalled to his duty, he made a hasty effort to repeat his instructions: "Fire, count five, challenge, an' call de corp'ral ob de gyard." Was that it? It did n't somehow seem exactly right, but—— what is that? A dim form is advancing swiftly toward him. The next instant a deafening report rings out on the still night air, there is a fall, a challenge of "who come dar?" and then the sounds of a furious struggle.

A minute later the corporal of the guard and his men found their newest recruit standing panting, but victorious, over two of the *Egret's* crew whom he had hurled to the ground, while a short distance from them lay the lifeless body of Captain Earl Staver. He had led the escape, and so fell a victim

to the bullet of a sentry who believed it his duty to fire first and challenge afterwards. Only two men had followed him, the others being so alarmed by the musket-shot, that they hurriedly retreated to the cells they had fondly hoped never to see again.

For this exploit the new recruit not only received great praise from his superiors, but was made a corporal. He was also provided with an alleged uniform, in the shape of an old blue blouse that still retained one brass button, and a brimless straw hat to which was attached a red *pompon*. Although the incident, that covered him with such glory created much excitement at the time, it was quickly forgotten in the rush of stirring events that followed. The rebels were reported to be advancing on Cape Haytian, the American man-of-war went around there to see what was going on, and all available troops, Corporal Cæsar among the rest, were ordered to the front.

On the very day that they were to leave, Mr. Almy, who, as a victim of official procrastination, was almost in despair of ever recovering his yacht, managed to secure a few minutes' unobserved conversation with the newly fledged corporal.

"It does n't look as though they ever intended to release my vessel in spite of all their promises," began the *Egret's* owner.

"How den, we is gwine get back to Sir Rich?" demanded the negro, whose sole object in life was to go to the relief of the castaways on the island.

"I have made up my mind to gain possession of the yacht, and run her out at night, if I can get even one man to help me. Will you be that one?"

"Ob cose! Me bery glad! Me take my squad, go cotch um now, 'spose yo' say so," replied Corporal Cæsar, who believed his present authority to be only limited by the fighting abilities of his immediate command.

"No," laughed Mr. Almy, "I am afraid that plan would n't work. In fact, you must not give a living soul the slightest cause to suspect our intentions. I propose to put our plan into execution this very night; but all the same you must march out of town with the rest of the troops, as though you had no idea of halting this side of Cape Haytian. As soon as possible, after dark, though, you must manage to slip out of camp and return to the city. At midnight I will be waiting in a boat, on the south side

of the man-o'-war landing-stage. Take this whistle, and when you reach the landing blow it very gently, that I may recognize you. Now be very careful, and remember that if this plan fails, the chances are that you will never again see your friend 'Sir Rich,' as you call him."

"Yes, sah, me onstan'; an' me be dar, shuah," replied the young negro, at the same time grinning broadly at the prospect of so exciting an adventure.

The disorderly mob of black, ragged, poorly equipped, and undrilled troops intended for Cape Haytian, marched out of Port-au-Prince that evening, leaving the city almost without a military guard. The fate of the government depended wholly upon the battle to be fought as soon as these troops encountered the rebels, and Mr. Almy knew that now or never he must regain possession of his yacht. If the government should win the coming battle, it would be harder to deal with than ever. On the other hand, if the rebels gained the day, and so became the ruling party, they would be very loth to relinquish a piece of property so valuable as the yacht, for which they had already paid so dearly.

Thus compelled to act by himself for himself, and with a liberal but judicious expenditure of money, the *Egret's* owner laid his plans, for the carrying out of which he must depend so entirely upon the good faith, courage, and skill of Corporal Cæsar.

“It is a fortunate thing for me,” said Mr. Almy to himself, “that Gale Ellicot, acting as my mate, managed to obtain so remarkable an influence over this black fellow. I honestly believe the prospect of rejoining Gale is the only thing in the world that would induce the corporal to relinquish his newly acquired military position.”

After dark Mr. Almy brought the skiff, that he had purchased ostensibly to go fishing in, around to the man-of-war landing, and at midnight he sat in it awaiting, with such patience as he could command, the coming of his black ally.

Cæsar arrived a few minutes late, but breathless and panting. “Dey ’s affer me! De whole squad ’s er comin’!” he gasped, as he tumbled into the skiff and, seizing the carefully muffled oars, shot her out into the darkness.

Sure enough, in another moment the place they had just left was filled with the sounds of running

feet and excited voices; but as no one connected the deserter with the yacht *Egret*, nor supposed for a moment that he had taken to the water, the pursuit soon drifted away in another direction.

As, after a long but cautiously directed search, the skiff finally drifted alongside of a black bulk, which Mr. Almy recognized as the yacht *Egret*, it was promptly challenged by the watch on deck.

“Who come dar?”

“Ossifer wif de countersign,” replied Cæsar, who had picked up this bit of military knowledge during his short term of service.

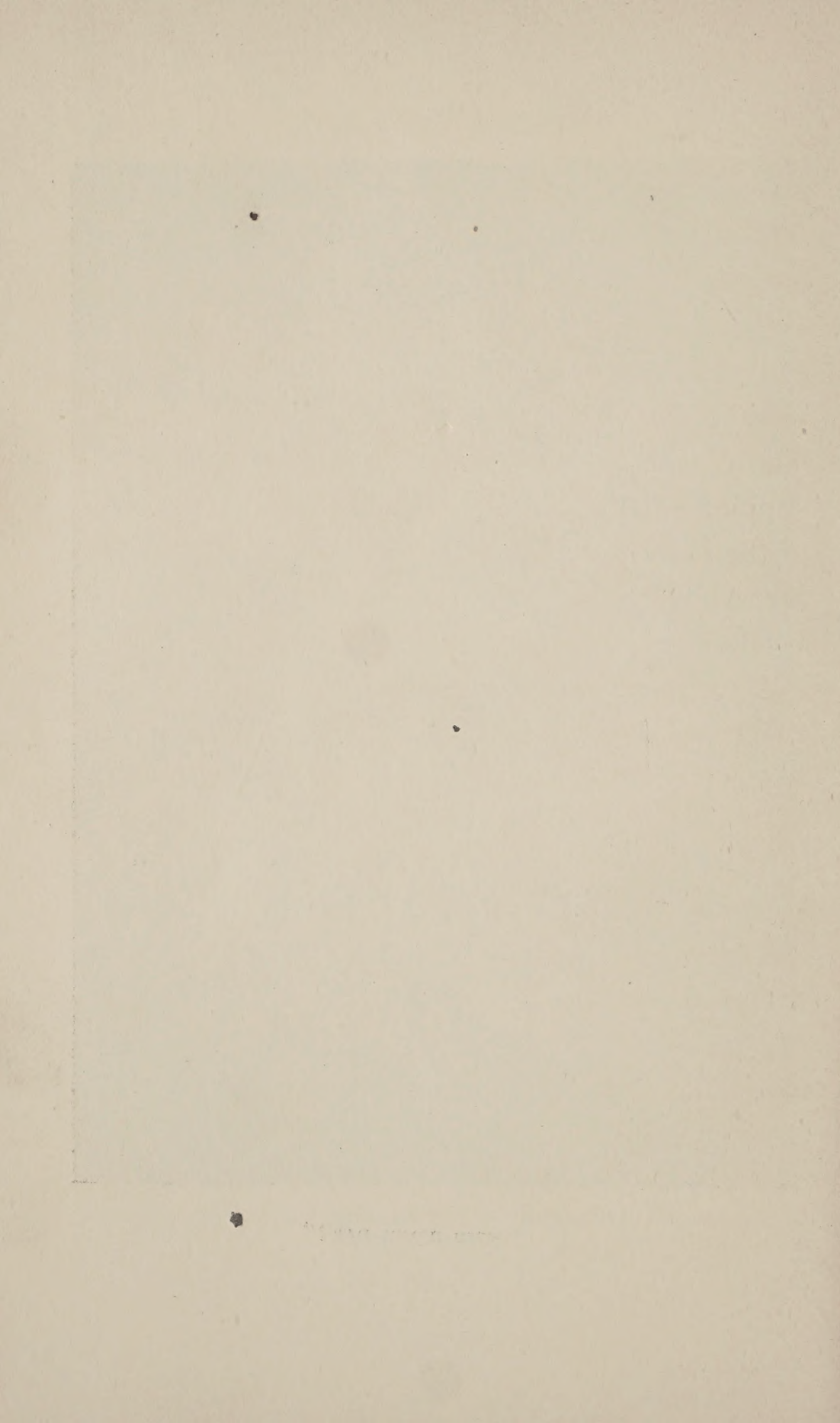
“Advance, ossifer, an’ gib up de countersign befo’ yo’ steps on deck.”

Cæsar obeyed this order, and, being closely followed by Mr. Almy, they had the only two men left on board the yacht knocked down, bound, and gagged, ere these found a chance to give an alarm.

The tide was ebbing, a circumstance that had been taken into account in Mr. Almy’s calculations, and, two minutes later, the *Egret*, with her cable cut, was drifting down the harbor. In order to give her steerage-way, Cæsar began to hoist the jib. As he did this, the unavoidable rattle of blocks drew



“WHO COMES DAR?”



a sharp hail from the battery, beneath the guns of which the yacht had been moored. There being no answer, it was repeated, and then, with a flash and a roar, a cannon-ball was hurled at the place where she had been. It was too late, for there were no search-lights, at least not in Hayti in those days. The *Egret* had already gathered headway, and was slipping swiftly away through the darkness, and out of the harbor, before a steady, off-shore breeze. By Mr. Almy's orders, Cæsar had severed the prisoners' bonds, and compelled them to hoist the heavy main-sail, and afterwards the foresail. Then, when the yacht was fairly clear of the land, he invited them to enter the skiff, cast off its painter, and allowed it to drop out of sight astern.

Thus with a crew of but two men, one of whom, however, was possessed of the strength of three ordinary sailors, while the other was a first-class navigator, the good yacht *Egret* sailed away from the waters of the Black Republic, and started in search of her lost mate and cabin boy.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A GOLDEN VASE FROM THE CORAL SHIP.

WHEN Aleck Penrose awoke after twelve hours of dreamless sleep, the morning sun was already well above the horizon. Many birds were singing in the dense foliage above him, and, softened by distance, the ceaseless fret of waves against the rock-bound coast came to him as a pleasant murmur. For some minutes he lay motionless, drowsily enjoying his surroundings. Finally he sat up, and looked about him. Gale was nowhere to be seen. "Where can he be, I wonder?" soliloquized the boy. "He must have gone to the field to hunt up something for breakfast."

The fire was burning brightly, and had evidently been recently replenished, so Gale must be all right, and there could be no occasion for uneasiness. Aleck went down to the lake for a dip in its cool waters, and was returning to camp, when a shout announced the coming of his comrade.

As Gale reached the place where they had slept, he carefully deposited on the ground something at which Aleck gazed in amazement. It was a golden vase of quaint design and exquisite workmanship, and the young mate regarded it with an air of proud satisfaction and repressed excitement.

"What is it, Gale? where did you get it? You have n't been in that awful cavern again!" exclaimed Aleck.

"That's exactly where I have been, old man, and that is where I mean to go again. I don't like it much better than you do, but I can't afford to leave such prizes as this lying around loose for some one else to pick up. Why, Aleck, my boy, do you realize that there is a fortune for both of us down there inside that old shell of coral, and only waiting to be gathered up? I don't believe you half appreciate the tremendous luck that has befallen us."

"No," replied Aleck, soberly, picking up the golden vase as he spoke and gazing at it reflectively, "I don't suppose I do. I only realize the horror of that dreadful place and how nearly we lost our lives in there. When I think of it, I know that not all the wealth of the world could tempt me to go through

that awful water again. I realize that Cæsar is dead, and that we are cast away on this unhappy island with no chance of leaving it, unless the Indians take us off, and I 'd rather stay here than have that happen. So, even if we could recover the treasure from the Coral Ship, which I now wish we never had found, I don't see what good it would do us. Without Cæsar to help us I don't believe we can get it any way."

"All that you have said is very true," answered Gale, munching at a big yellow banana as he spoke, "and, when I woke up, an hour or so ago, I felt very much as you do. You see I dreamed all night of my dear little home away up north in Rockpine, and of the troubles that are crowding into it. I don't believe that I ever told you that there is a thousand-dollar mortgage on our place that will be foreclosed if it is n't paid by the first of May, and that if that happens I shall lose one of the very dearest homes any fellow ever had."

"No," said Aleck, sympathetically, "you never told me about it, and I am awfully sorry to hear it."

"Well, the mortgage is there," continued Gale, "and I dreamed of it last night, until, when I woke

up, it seemed as though I could hear mother begging me not to let her home be taken from her. For a few minutes I felt blue enough, I can tell you. Then, all of a sudden, I remembered the Coral Ship, and the bunch of oysters enclosing some yellow metal that I brought up from it. You remember, we were looking at it when the big wave washed over the ledge and put out our fire."

"Indeed I do. That is one of the times I shall never forget. The wave came just as I was looking at the metal and wondering if it could be gold. This vase is n't what we were looking at, is it?"

"Yes, it was the golden foundation of that very bunch of oysters, and I had a job finding it too. Now there must be more like it where this came from, and I for one don't propose to throw away any such a chance of raising that mortgage. What do you suppose the lump of coral Cæsar brought up turned out to be?"

"Can't imagine. Gold, perhaps?"

"No, not gold; but the next thing to it, a pig of solid silver, and so heavy that I did n't dare try to fetch it out through the front door, much as I wanted to."

"But what can we do without Cæsar?" demanded Aleck, who began to feel a return of his old enthusiasm regarding the lost treasure ship.

"I don't know. It makes my heart ache to realize how much we have lost in more ways than one by that faithful fellow's death. I have thought of a plan though. You see I can't do anything down there alone, and you say you won't ever go into the cave again through the front door."

"Through that awful water? No, indeed! I never will."

"Well, I can't blame you; but I've thought of opening a back door by enlarging the blow-hole."

"I thought you said the rock was too hard for the axe to cut."

So it is, on the surface; but it is quite soft underneath, and besides the hole ought to be enlarged from below as much as possible, so that no more of the work may be visible from the outside than is absolutely necessary. You know we are liable to be visited by Indians at any time. But anyhow, I don't propose to use the axe to cut rock with. It is too valuable for that. I think we can find some bits of old iron in the junk pile that will answer our purpose."

“There’s nothing there with an edge to it.”

“We’ll make edges.”

“Besides, it’s only iron, and we ought to have steel to cut rock with.”

“We’ll turn it into steel, or at least we’ll harden it.”

Although Aleck, who knew nothing of the blacksmith’s art, wondered how this was to be done, he decided to wait and see instead of asking questions.

After a breakfast of fruit, potatoes, and a few oysters that Gale had brought with him from the cavern, the two lads, full of their new project, visited the junk pile beside the landing. Here, while Gale selected some bits of iron that he thought might be made into drills, Aleck, under his direction, built a fire of dry, hard wood on the rocks, close beside a pool of water. When this fire had produced a fierce bed of coals, Gale thrust one end of his irons into them. To withdraw and hold these he used a green stick with a cleft end. The cleft was held open by a long wedge until the iron was within it. Then, the wedge being withdrawn, the enclosed object was held fast.

Using an old anchor as an anvil, and the axe as a

hammer, Gale beat the red-hot end of each of the irons into a fairly sharp cutting edge. After being re-heated, this was hardened by being plunged into cold water. In this manner the boys had, by noon, fashioned half a dozen rude drills. The rest of the day was devoted to removing these to the cavern, and in constructing another camp at the extreme upper end of the island, nearly two miles from the old one, and as remote from the usual landing-place of the Indians as they could get.

On the following day they began operations in earnest at the blow-hole, Gale working inside the cavern, while Aleck, from above, carefully chipped away the surface rock. As they could not work at high tide, it took two weeks of persistent toil to enlarge the opening sufficiently to enable them to pass through it. When this was done, they removed as completely as possible all exterior traces of their work, and scattered some weather-beaten rocks carelessly about the opening, so as to conceal it from any but the closest observation.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GALE OUTWITS THE INDIANS.

A LECK PENROSE shuddered as he found himself once more within the hateful cavern, where he had suffered so much; but the greater volume of light that now penetrated it, and the certainty that he could escape from it at any moment, gave him courage to remain. He now saw for the first time the great bar or "pig" of silver that Cæsar had brought up, and from which Gale had removed most of the enclosing coral. He was greatly disappointed in its appearance, for its surface was almost as black as coal, whereas he had expected it to be bright and shining. When, however, Gale, with a few deep scratches, exposed the brighter metal underlying the oxydized surface, Aleck was fully satisfied, and became eager to aid in recovering more of the precious bars. He was even more excited than he had been at sight of the golden vase; for,

in his poverty-stricken life, he had seen and handled silver at a few rare intervals, but gold he had only known by hearsay.

“Can it really be silver, Gale,” he cried, “the same as they make dollars and quarters and dimes of?”

“It really is the very same kind of silver,” replied the other.

“How many dimes do you suppose could be made out of this lump?”

“Oh, I don’t know. Several thousand I should think.”

“Several thousand dimes! Why, Gale Ellicot! do you suppose anybody ever had so much money as that at one time?” cried the incredulous boy.

“I guess they have,” laughed Gale, “and now I’m going down for another thousand or so.”

Thus saying the young mate, who had been stripping off his clothing, dove down to the source of all this wealth, the coral-encrusted galleon, on which his great-great-grandfather had once sailed as a captive. With the increased light pouring into the cavern, the outlines of the ship could be traced much more distinctly than before, and Aleck watched with

breathless interest every movement of his comrade beneath the green waters. To his great disappointment Gale reappeared in less than a minute empty-handed.

“It’s going to be awful hard work,” he gasped as he lay on the rocky shelf recovering his breath. “They are all cemented together with coral. If I were as strong as Cæsar was, I might wrench them loose; but as I’m not, I must have some sort of a bar down there to pry with. So I guess I’ll go over to the landing for a couple of those long copper bolts, while you return to camp and get supper ready. It is too late to do anything more down here to-day anyhow.”

Our castaways had been so interested in their recent labors, and in planning for their ultimate escape from the island, that they had almost ceased to think of the Indians who were liable to visit it at any time. They had begun by cautiously exploring the lower end of their domain every morning, before going to work; but of late they had neglected to do this, and only went as far as the field when in need of a fresh supply of provisions. On this particular evening, however, they were recalled to a sense of

danger by Gale's discovery, near the lake, of a camp-fire surrounded by the scattered remnants of a feast, and from the landing-place, to which he advanced with the greatest caution, of a small fleet of canoes just disappearing in the distance.

"Oh, Gale!" cried Aleck, when he heard this news, "let us think of some way of escaping from this dreadful place at once. Never mind the treasure. What good would all the gold and silver in the world do us, if we should fall into the hands of the savages? Did n't you say there were bones scattered about the fire? Then they must have been eating their prisoners, like the cannibals in *Robinson Crusoe*. Please, let's work at a boat or something to get away with, instead of bothering any more with that silver."

"Nonsense, old man!" replied Gale. "Whatever the Indians of this country are, they are not cannibals, that is certain; and I don't believe they'd even kill us, if they caught us."

"They killed poor Cæsar."

"We don't know that. Perhaps he was drowned. At any rate, I'm not going to abandon the coral ship until I have got enough out of her to pay that

mortgage, and have something left over too. As for a boat, you know well enough, we could n't build one with only an old dull axe to work with. We could n't make even a raft, that would do anything more than drift out to sea with the current, and how would we be any better off then? Now my plan is, to wait patiently a little longer, gather in what silver we can from the Coral Ship, and then let the Indians provide us with a means of escape."

"How?"

"By lending us one of their canoes the next time they come. It is n't likely that we will see anything more of them for several weeks, though we'll keep a careful look-out from this time on. In the meantime we'll get up just as much of that silver as ever we can, and have it all ready to carry away at the first opportunity. When the Indians come, I'll watch till they are busy with their feasting, and then I'll sneak their canoes. We'll keep one for our own use, and set the others adrift, so they can't follow us. How does that strike you for a scheme?"

"I think it is a pretty desperate one," answered Aleck, doubtfully.

As no better plan suggested itself, however, the lads worked ten days longer with it always in their minds. During this time Gale, even with the aid of his copper levers, only succeeded in wrenching loose and bringing to the surface six more of the silver bars. He brought up a vast quantity of worthless objects, which, in the obscurity, and while covered with coral or oysters, he could not distinguish from those he sought. Only when Aleck had knocked off their casings, was their value or worthlessness discovered.

At length came the day for which they had watched so anxiously, and with so much of trepidation, the day that brought another fleet of Indian canoes to the island. As usual, the savages arrived in the morning, prepared to spend a day in the cultivation of their field and in feasting. Before dark they would leave, for no Indian would willingly spend a night on the island. The sounds that occasionally greeted them from the blow-hole, a phenomenon they had never dared investigate, were too frightful. They believed them to be the wailings of departed members of their tribe, who, having met death by drowning, were thereby unfitted for the

happy hunting-grounds. Only by the capture of some living person, and dragging him beneath the waves, to take his place, could one of these unhappy spirits escape from his watery purgatory.

Having gained an inkling of this superstition by reflecting upon the previous visits of the Indians, Gale somewhat modified his plan of action. "Instead of setting all the canoes adrift," he said to Aleck, "I shall float away with one as quietly as possible, and hide it somewhere in the mangroves, leaving the others for them to take their departure in, as they are almost certain to do before dark. Then, after they have gone, we can get our silver on board, and prepare for our own voyage at our leisure. I want you to promise me one thing though. It is that you will go into the cavern the minute I start for the canoes, and stay there until sundown, if you don't hear from me sooner. I hardly think you will hear from me before that, for I expect to remain in hiding myself, with the canoe, until dark, unless I have a certain knowledge that the Indians have gone away earlier."

Aleck promised to do as Gale desired, and then, from a place of concealment, the two watched the

Indians. Until long after noon these worked diligently in the field. When their labors there were ended they sat down to a feast that caused the watchers to realize how very hungry they were themselves.

Now was the time for action, and, after a whispered farewell, Aleck returned to the cavern, while Gale stole cautiously in the direction of the canoes. He succeeded in reaching them, getting one afloat, and starting off in it without detection. There, however, his good fortune ended; for an Indian, who happened to visit the canoes in search of some missing article, caught sight of him just as he was disappearing around a point of mangroves, and raised a shrill cry of alarm. Three minutes later the pursuit had begun.

Gale had purposely directed his course toward the back, or inshore, side of the island, for there the mangroves were thickest. Ere he had time to select a hiding-place, however, he heard the savage cries of his pursuers, and knew that he had been detected. Now his only hope was to keep out of their sight until he had rounded the upper end of the island. Then, abandoning his canoe, he hoped to regain the

cave by making a short cut through the forest. To his dismay this plan was also upset, for as he gained the point, there on the rocks stood an Indian who had hastened across the island on foot in the hope of thus intercepting him.

For a moment even Gale's stout heart failed him, and there seemed no possible way of escape. Yes there was though. There was one chance left. It was a very slender one, but still a chance. Again the lad bent over his paddle, tugging at it for dear life. The nearest of the pursuing canoes gained on him rapidly. Now it is only a few feet away. Now its bow touches the stern of the one in which he sits. Suddenly, as Gale makes a last desperate effort to escape, his frail craft capsizes, and floats bottom upward with him beneath it. A few seconds later a shrill but muffled cry, sounding like a wail of mortal agony, rises on the evening air. The bewildered Indians glance at their surroundings and discover that they are in the immediate vicinity of the awful spot haunted by the drowned of their tribe. They call to each other that the white lad whom they have been pursuing has been seized by invisible hands, and drawn down into the purgatory

of waters. They right the capsized canoe, but find nothing beneath it. At this confirmation of their fears they bend lustily to their paddles and fly in terror.



NOW IT IS ONLY A FEW FEET AWAY.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

JOY TREADS ON THE HEELS OF DESPAIR.

A LECK obeyed Gale's instructions so far as to return to the cavern, and conceal himself within its gloomy recesses; but he could not resist the desire to lift his head above the edge of the blow-hole, now and then, for a glance at his surroundings. He felt guilty every time he did this, for he realized that if the Indians caught a glimpse of him while in this position, not only would his own capture be certain, but that of his companion would follow as a matter of course. After the second of these furtive surveys of the situation, during which he saw nothing to alarm him, the boy struggled against the desire to take another, for what seemed to him an age. At length he could resist no longer, and, very cautiously, he began a third ascent of the narrow shaft. His head had not quite reached the surface, when he was suddenly seized by

the legs and jerked violently backward. The poor boy uttered a yell of terror as he was dragged down into the cavern, for he believed that he had fallen into the hands of the Indians, and that his last hour had come.

When Gale Ellicot purposely overturned his stolen canoe and dived from it, he had calculated his position so nicely that he was exactly over the submarine entrance to the cavern. A moment later he had cleared the rocky portal and gained its interior. The very first object on which his eyes rested was the lower portion of Aleck's body being drawn slowly up through the opening to the outer surface. There was no time to utter a warning or for deliberate action. In an instant Gale had seized hold of the unsuspecting lad, and pulled him back into the safety of their gloomy hiding-place.

"How could you do such a thing, Gale?" began Aleck, indignantly, the moment he realized who it was that had treated him with such scant ceremony. "You frightened me almost to death."

"I expect you would have been frightened wholly to death in another minute if I had not done it," replied the other, grimly. "Why, old man, the Indians

are just swarming around this place, both on land and water. If they had caught sight of you it would have been all up with us. As it is I am afraid that yell of yours has done the business, and will bring them in here after us. Our only hope now is to get back there in the dark and trust to our luck to keep them from seeing us."

So the two lads scrambled to that remote corner of the cavern where they had already passed one night of terror. From here, while Gale told in low tones of his unsuccessful attempt to secure a means of escape from the island, and how nearly he had been captured, and while Aleck related his experiences, they both watched, with fascinated gaze, the patch of lighted water beneath the blow-hole. Once Gale thought he heard a faint, far-away, booming noise, like the firing of a gun; but as Aleck did not hear it, he fancied himself mistaken.

After an hour spent in this fashion, Gale grew so impatient of the suspense and inaction that he declared he must go and discover, in some way, what was taking place outside.

"Then I shall go too," said Aleck, in a determined voice. "I will never be left here alone again."

Gale agreed that Aleck should go with him, and they were about to start, when, with a horrified gasp, the latter clutched his companion's arm. "They 've come !" he whispered hoarsely. "See there !"

Gale certainly did see, and his heart sank like lead at the sight. A man, and a black one at that, was slowly drawing himself from the water, and gazing cautiously about him. The young castaways hardly breathed as they crouched low in their hiding-place and stared at him. Through the gloom they could not distinguish his features, but of course he was an Indian, and would presently be joined by others. Then the search that must lead to their discovery would begin.

How bitterly Aleck repented of that outcry, and of the incautiousness that led to it. How Gale wished he had let the canoes alone, as he remembered that, but for him, the Indians would, ere this, have departed, leaving them in peace and safety. How both of them wished that, instead of wasting their time and strength over the recovery of sunken treasure, they had devoted all their energies to escaping from the island. But it was all too late now. Never

again would they see their distant loved ones, nor would their fate ever be known. In a few minutes more all would be over for them. See! even now the Indian is approaching them. Now he is shouting to his comrades. What! Can it be? Impossible! The dead can't shout with the voice of the living!

Again the startling cry rang through the echoing recesses of the cavern, "Sir Rich! Sir Rich Allason! Ohé, Sir Rich!"

With an answering, but inarticulate, cry of mingled ecstasy, amazement, and incredulity, Gale Ellicot sprang from his place of concealment. In another moment he had actually flung his arms about the negro's neck, and was hugging him.

"Cæsar alive and well! Can it be Cæsar! or is it his ghost?"

"No sah, boss! me ain't no ghos'!" cried the black, almost choked by the other's embrace, and almost as wild as he with joy. "Me be 'er shuah 'nough libe nigger; am' de happies' in de worl'. Me jess a gibbing up, an' sayin' taint no use. Deys gone, an' me nebber see 'em no mo'. Den me tink me gib one litty yell, an' sho 'nough, hit fotch um."

"But how can it be? Where have you been?"

Where did you come from? How did you know we were here? How did you get past the Indians? What has become of the Indians anyway?"

These and a score of similar questions were asked by both boys with breathless rapidity.

"De Injin!" answered Cæsar, finally getting a chance to speak. "Golly! how him run when me shoot cannon gun at him! Him skeer 'mos' to def, an' me 'mos' die laffin' at him. He ain't come back no mo'."

"A cannon?" questioned Gale, catching at this word. "Where did you get a cannon? Whose cannon?"

"Whar me get um? On de *Regret* ob cose. Marse Almy he say, bettah gib um one shot wif blank-ety catridge, fo' luck. So me gib um. Bang! Den dey run like Hayti man run when de corporal gittin after him."

"The *Egret*! Mr. Almy! Hayti! Well it beats my understanding!" said Gale. "I expect the air of this place makes one thick-headed. So let 's get outside. You go up through the hole, Aleck, and we 'll meet you on the rocks. The back way is too slow for me."

Thus saying, Gale, who being already soaked, did not mind the wetting, took a straight header into the green depths, and shot out under the portal. As he rose to the surface with a snort and a shout, he almost bumped his head against a boat, in which a most anxious-looking gentleman held the oars.

“Gale Ellicot, by all that ’s wonderful!”

“Mr. Almy! Hurray!!”

Then Aleck Penrose and Cæsar appeared on the shore, as though by magic. A minute later they were all in the boat, and, with lusty strokes that somewhat relieved his overflowing joy, Cæsar was speeding them toward the good yacht *Egret*, that lay at anchor but a few hundred yards offshore.

That evening was one of such happiness as rarely comes to mortals more than once in a lifetime. It was so filled with questions, and the intensely interesting answers that they drew forth, that it was long past midnight ere any one of the happy party even thought of turning in. Mr. Almy had to tell of his experience in running away with his own yacht, and of navigating her over hundreds of miles of almost unknown waters with but a single man in his crew. As they at length neared the island, that

Cæsar found no difficulty in recognizing, they met a fleet of Indian canoes. To give the savages a wholesome scare, as well as in the hope of attracting the attention of those whom they sought, Mr. Almy had allowed Cæsar to fire a blank cartridge from the yacht's brass saluting cannon. Then they landed, and had almost given up all hope of finding the lads, when Cæsar bethought himself of the cavern, and begged permission to explore it.

The negro had to tell of his experience at sea, during a night of storm, on an overturned canoe, of how he had navigated a turtle, been taken for a mermaid, and lassoed, and of how, after serving two days as a private soldier, he had been made an officer. He also told of Captain Staver's unregretted death, and of his own fears lest he should never again see his beloved "Sir Rich."

Gale told of the wonderful discovery of the coral ship with its long-hidden wealth of silver and gold. He ended with: "It is so hard to get up, that I am afraid we can't recover much more of the treasure. I don't care though, for I've got more than enough now to lift the mortgage on my home, even with Aleck's and Cæsar's shares taken out.

Of course Mr. Almy was intensely interested in all this, and when, at his request, Gale told him of the dear little Rockpine home, and the mortgage held by Abel Gripmore, he declared that they must recover at least enough of the treasure to support that home and its inmates for some years after the mortgage was lifted. "You hope to go to college, don't you?" he asked of Gale.

"Yes, sir."

"And Aleck here must have an education?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Very well, then, we must look to the Coral Ship to satisfy the Bursar. As for Cæsar's share ——."

But Cæsar, begging to be excused for interrupting, positively refused to accept any share of the recovered treasure, declaring that every pesata of it belonged to "Sir Rich Allason." At the same time Aleck thought if his share should amount to so vast a sum as one thousand dimes, he should be more than satisfied.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW BLACK CÆSAR'S PLEDGE WAS REDEEMED.

ON the following morning the golden vase, which Mr. Almy pronounced to be worth at least a thousand dollars, and the seven bars of silver already recovered, were brought off to the *Egret*, then, leaving Aleck on board to look after the yacht, the others visited the cavern, where Mr. Almy, peering down through the green waters, set eyes for the first time on the Coral Ship.

“It is certainly the most remarkable thing I ever saw,” he said, as he finally withdrew his fascinated gaze and rose to his feet. “It is a veritable ship of living coral. While it seems a pity to destroy anything so curiously interesting, it would be a still greater pity to leave it without an effort to recover the treasure that is undoubtedly hidden within its massive walls. I propose, therefore, that we blow it up.”

"How?" asked Gale, wonderingly.

"Well, I should say that about twenty pounds of powder in a water-tight canister, and judiciously placed, would at least serve to effect an entrance," answered Mr. Almy.

"But how could we touch it off down there?" asked Gale, who had never witnessed any submarine work of the kind.

"That may prove difficult; but I believe it can be done with the aid of an electric battery that I have on board."

Besides being interested in all scientific matters, Mr. Almy was possessed of considerable mechanical skill. By night he had his arrangements perfected, and all hands awaited impatiently the coming of another day for the trial of their experiment.

That evening, as they sat on deck enjoying the glorious tropical moonlight, and trying to realize that, as April was not yet gone by, the North was still covered with ice and snow, Gale turned to Cæsar and asked him if he had ever seen snow.

"No, me nebber see um."

"It will be fun to see what you think of it, then, when we first get North."

“Me gettin’ Norf?”

“Of course. You are going to Boston with us.”

“Ef yo’ sayin’ de word, Sah Rich, ob cose me bleeged to go; but me bery sorry. Me like here better; but when Sah Rich say go, Cæsar mus’ go. My great-granfodder say all he chilleen blong to Sah Rich Allason forebber. He say: ‘Sah Rich wise man, good man. Yo’ do alway what him say. Yo’ die fo him, mebbe, ef him sayin’ so.’ So me bleeged to do what my granfodder tellin’ me.”

“Well, of course I am not ‘Sir Rich,’ as you call him. If I were I would n’t ask you to do anything so absurd as that, and even if I did you would have too much sense to obey me; but——”

“No, sah! No, sah! Me got no sense, but fo doin’ what yo’ say. Yo’ sayin’ die, den me die quick. Same time yo’ sayin’ do somefin else; den me do somefin else,” interrupted the negro, earnestly.

“I declare, I believe you would even lay down your life if I asked it of you,” replied Gale, touched by the evident devotion of this humble friend; “but, as I shall never ask such a thing, we won’t have to put your willingness to the test. I hope you will go with us, though, to see my country and my people,

and the dear home your old treasure ship is going to save from destruction."

"S'posin' yo' say so, me go," answered the young negro, quietly.

The next morning Aleck was left, as before, to look after the yacht, while the others, taking their prepared apparatus for destruction with them, went ashore and into the cavern, for the purpose of blowing up the Coral Ship.

In about an hour Aleck heard a muffled explosion. Twenty minutes later, while he was still wondering what effect had been produced, he was surprised to see the boat coming back to the yacht. His surprise was increased, when it drew near, by the sight of Mr. Almy rowing, and Gale, with a very pale face on which were streaks of blood, half reclining in the stern.

"What has happened, sir? Where is Cæsar?" he asked anxiously.

"Help me get this poor fellow on board, and don't ask any questions just yet," answered the yacht-owner in a voice that trembled with emotion.

"He has done what he said he would. He has died for my sake," murmured Gale as, with an arm

about his friend's neck, he walked feebly to the cabin companion-way.

After the injured lad had been got to bed, and the bleeding from many cuts on his head had been stanchèd, Mr. Almy administered an opiate that quickly put him to sleep. Then he told Aleck Penrose all that he knew of the tragic event of the morning.

“Both Gale and Cæsar went down and located the mine well inside of the ship,” he said. “When everything was arranged to their satisfaction, and I had made sure that the battery was in good working order, I turned on the current, and the charge was successfully fired. For some minutes the water was so filled with smoke and *débris* that we could see nothing, but Ellicot was so impatient to learn the result of our experiment, that he could not wait for it to become perfectly clear. He took a header as soon as the outline of the ship came dimly into view, and a moment later the ship itself seemed to collapse. At the same instant the water became so thick again that nothing could be distinguished from where we lay watching for Ellicot's return. Just then Cæsar uttered a cry of ‘Ohé, Sah Rich !

I comin' !' dove into the water, and disappeared. A few seconds later Ellicot came to the surface, so nearly exhausted that I had to drag him out. Cæsar never came up again. We waited until the water cleared, but could see nothing of him. Ellicot would have gone down again to try and recover the body, but I would not let him. He would only have sacrificed his own life uselessly, for he was too weak to swim a stroke."

"But what do you suppose became of poor Cæsar, sir?" asked Aleck, in an awed tone.

"As well as I could gather, from Ellicot's account, the ship's sides seemed to be blown out so that he could see right through her. He was part way in, and pulling at something that looked as though it might prove valuable, when, all at once, the deck fell on him, pinning him down so that he could not move hand or foot. Just as he was losing consciousness, he felt that he was again free. As, with a last effort, he slipped out of the deadly trap, he caught a glimpse of Cæsar bearing the whole enormous weight on his shoulders, but bent nearly double beneath it. That is all we know. I don't think there is any doubt, however, that the negro

realized what had happened as he knelt at my side, and went deliberately down there to save Ellicot's life at the expense of his own. He must have exerted superhuman strength in that supreme effort, and it must have failed him the instant he saw that Ellicot was free. Taking it all in all it was, to my mind, about as fine a bit of true heroism as this world has ever seen."

Shortly afterward, Mr. Almy and Aleck, leaving Gale quietly sleeping, went for one more look at the scene of the recent tragedy. As the wealthy yacht-owner and the humble cabin boy knelt together in the great cavern, and gazed down through the mysterious green waters, they saw far beneath them only a confused heap of coral. It bore no trace of resemblance to a ship, or any other work of man. To them, however, it was a splendid tomb, given shape and beauty by the brave deed of its latest occupant.

When they came away, they rolled a great stone over the entrance to the rocky shaft through which they had left the cavern, thus effectually concealing it from future observation. Then they returned to the *Egret*, lifted her anchor, spread her snowy sails, and, turning her prow northward, glided gently

away from Black Cæsar's Island. So strong and steady was the breeze that bore them onward, that by the time Gale Ellicot awoke from his strength-restoring sleep, he was well on the way toward his distant northern home, and the Coral Ship, with its priceless treasure of human gratitude, self-sacrifice, and bravery, was but a cherished memory.

THE END.







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